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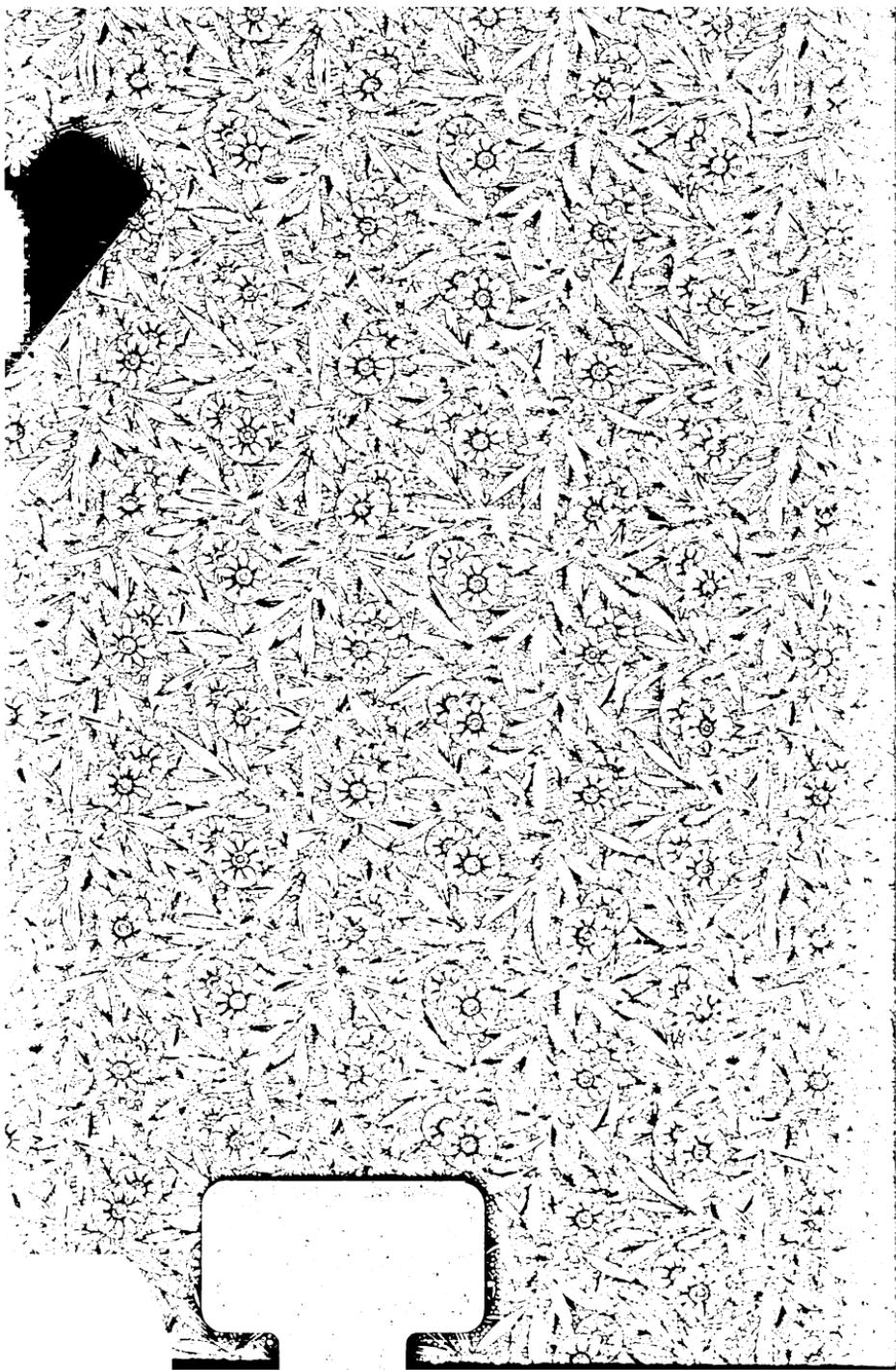
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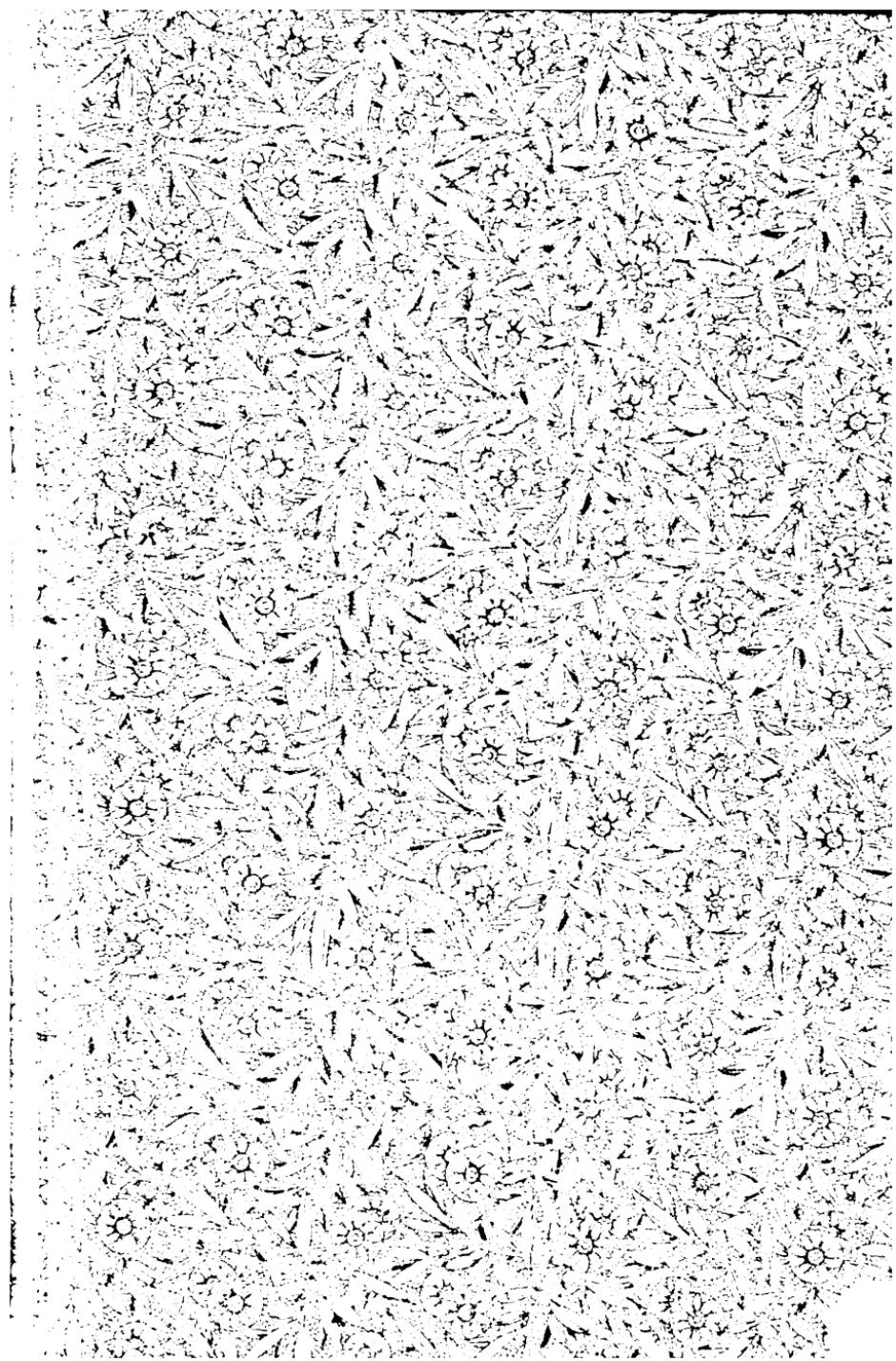
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# ENTRANCED WITH A DREAM.

*A NOVEL.*

BY

RICHARD ROWLAND

AUTHOR OF 'FISHING IN DEEP WATERS.'



*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. I.



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# ENTRANCED WITH A DREAM.



## CHAPTER I.

**W**OODCOME HALL, in the parish of Woodfield, surrounded by a noble park and many a broad acre of woodland, meadow, and arable land, has been for many generations in the possession of the Harewood family. Early in the present century the representative of the long line of owners was Sir Henry Harewood, a man of a roving disposition, who wandered about from place to place, chiefly on the Continent, in search of pleasure which, had he been so minded, he might have found with less trouble to himself and more profit to his countrymen at home.

One visit to Woodfield for a few days in the course of a year was all that he ever attempted,

and sometimes even that did not take place ; when it did, however, it made but little or no change to the men employed on his estate. A considerable amount of unusual bustle might be witnessed in and about the hall, while the gossips of the village had an opportunity of noting and commenting on the appearance of the strangers who accompanied him, but it wrought no sensible change in the ordinary course of events.

Sir Henry would gallop over the country with his friends, attended by his agent, and take a hasty look at his farms. But he did nothing more. The management of his property was left entirely in the hands of his agent, who, taking care to secure his rents, gave little heed to the character of his tenants, and not more to their homesteads than would barely suffice to keep them from falling to pieces.

Up to the age of fifty Sir Henry Harewood was a confirmed bachelor. At that period his state of single blessedness was brought to a close, and with it, to a great extent, his frequent change of residence. The old family seat was once more cheered by its master's presence, and there, within a year of his marriage, his wife presented him with a son and heir.

Ten years passed away, and Sir Henry was again a single man. Immediately after the funeral of his wife he broke up his establishment at Woodfield, and resumed his old habit

of wandering about on the Continent, apparently without any purpose in life further than that which tended to his own personal gratification.

This proved very injurious to his son, whose education had hitherto been carefully watched over by his mother. After her death it was given up into the hands of strangers, with scarcely any supervision from the father. Having reached his fourteenth year, he was sent to Eton, where he acquired extravagant notions of the influence he would be called upon to exercise in the world. Being well supplied with money, and possessed of an aggressive character, he soon became the head of a little party of boys of his own age and standing, which was too often on the border of rebellion against the constituted authorities of the school and the master of his boarding-house.

When the time approached for his university course to commence, he chose Cambridge in preference to Oxford, from the fact that two or three of his fast Eton companions were already there, and he expected more would shortly follow.

Early in the second year of his abode at Cambridge his habits became so irregular that, to save him from expulsion, he was obliged to be withdrawn by his father, who happened at the time to be in England. As Sir Henry himself was not overburdened with classical or mathematical knowledge, he was not inclined

to be very hard upon his son for the want of inclination he had shown for study, but he rated him well for the ungentlemanly conduct with which he was charged, and said he would engage a private tutor for him, and keep him under his own eye for the future.

This proved but a poor substitute for the discipline he so much needed. The gentleman, after a vigorous attempt to induce his pupil to work, shortly discovered that if he desired to retain his appointment, he must be ever ready to receive an excuse for neglected study, and accept of promises for future work, which he knew were not intended to be kept. It was a very pleasant life to be passing from one gay city to another with Sir Henry and his son, and so the tutor wisely determined, for his own interest, that if he could not do what he would, he would do what he could to bring his pupil on by indirect means as far on the road to wisdom as he could be induced to accompany him.

The greater part of the year was spent on the Continent, and chiefly in hotels, where the knowledge to be acquired was rather of a superficial character, with but small opportunity for real useful study, had the youth been inclined to give his attention to it. So long as he conducted himself in a gentlemanly manner in his presence, the father was not disposed to be very curious respecting his bearing at other times.

At the end of his first year the tutor, feeling how little he was doing to the advantage of his pupil, and not being altogether unscrupulous, found an excuse for resigning his office and returning to England. He felt that while he had the youth nominally under his charge, he would be held responsible for his conduct, which he only too well knew was irregular.

The youth had now nearly reached his twentieth year, and it needed but little persuasion on his part to convince his father that he knew quite enough of the classics and mathematics for the public life he intended to lead when their travels on the Continent should end.

‘A tutor is all very well for a boy,’ he said, ‘but I think you will now admit that I am a boy no longer. In the absence of a third person, I shall be more companionable with you; and if at any time you should be invited to a place where you do not want to take me, I shall not be alone. Your old servant Lea and I will manage to take care of each other.’

‘But suppose I should want to take Lea with me?’ said Sir Henry.

‘Then I must manage to take care of myself,’ said the hopeful son, and so the matter ended.

No other tutor was sought for, and the young man was practically at liberty to do as he chose, so that he was tolerably careful to keep up

appearances before the public, and especially in the presence of his father.

This state of things having lasted for some time, another step was taken in the direction of unlimited freedom. Their engagements often separated them from each other for a month or two. Sir Henry had a predilection for France. He liked the manners and customs of the people, while as days passed on his son rather inclined to those of Germany.

Waywardness was still the predominant feature in the character of the young man. Whatever changes took place in him were rather occasioned by newly-awakened appetites for pleasure than from any change of principle in his heart. His father was not niggardly in the money he placed at his disposal, though it often proved insufficient for him to meet his engagements, and then he was obliged to resort to other means to escape from his temporary difficulty, so that it became no uncommon thing for him to borrow of Lea the needful, to be repaid with interest when he should secure a larger remittance from his father.

The petty annoyance to which he was thus subjected threw him into more confidential correspondence with Lea than with his father, while it fostered in the former a love of money which was already implanted in his nature, and encouraged him to leave honesty behind in his

eager pursuit of gain. The profit he was making by his young master's follies caused him to assist in cheating Sir Henry, who, so long as no pressing complaints came before him, did not go out of his way to seek for them.

Had he been more observant of a father's duty, many an error his son fell into might have been avoided, and especially one which was the cause of much pain and sorrow to a young and too confiding girl. At a village not far from Heilbroun, the young man, attended by Lea, had been attracted by a beautiful girl at the door of a small house in the midst of a garden fragrant with flowers. Unused to control any passion that found its way into his heart, he at once declared to Lea that he was madly in love with her.

This was not the first declaration of the kind Lea had listened to, and helped him to the gratification of his desire; but on the present occasion he found he had a person to deal with who valued an unspotted name above the price of gold. This led him to adopt a scheme with the aid of a confederate, by going through the ceremony of marriage, of placing her in the arms of his young master. The opposition the young man had met with had so whetted his appetite, that marriage, real or sham, became to him for the time a matter of indifference, so that, as he said, he might call her his own.

And she became his own entirely as far as she herself was concerned, and at the expressed desire of her husband, who had been tutored by Lea for the purpose, consented to retire to another village and live with him away from the world until he could find a favourable opportunity of reconciling his father to their marriage. Lea, seeing that his young master was becoming really attached to his wife, suddenly found himself in rather an awkward position, and sought immediately to bring about a separation between them, but this he did not find of easy accomplishment.

The young man declared that his love grew more hearty and sincere every day, and that he wanted little to persuade him to go to his father and inform him that he had a wife. Lea, seeing this, was obliged for the present to desist from the attempt, and wait on circumstances for the means of carrying out his purpose.

He was too well off in Sir Henry's service to run the risk of his master's discovering the connection his son had formed, and he was too much mixed up with the doings of the son to act in open opposition to him. He could, therefore, do nothing but temporise for a while by supplying the extra means that were required to meet the increasing household expenses, and making excuses to Sir Henry for his son growing so fond of Germany.

‘I don’t know what will happen,’ said Sir Henry one day to Lea, ‘if my son’s attraction to Germany is to go on increasing as it has done of late, unless I go and live there myself.’

‘You will not do that, I think, Sir Henry,’ said Lea; ‘you like France so much better.’

‘Yes; but I cannot afford to be always separated from my son.’

‘He said, when he sent me to you yesterday,’ replied Lea; ‘that he would be in Paris in the course of a day or two, and stop a very long time with you.’

Within a week he reached his father’s hotel; but it was only to die there. His wild and reckless manner of living had rendered him only too ready to fall a victim to an attack of typhoid fever he had contracted by the way, and of so malignant a kind was it, that ere the son could answer his father’s eager inquiries as to the nature and cause of his illness, he became unconscious, and so continued for the next twenty-four hours, when he ceased to breathe.

The Paris world did not see how severely Sir Henry felt the blow that had fallen upon him. For the short time he remained there, he strove when in company to appear calm and collected; but, when alone, his disguise was thrown off, and he looked as he felt, very miser-

able. He had a great dislike to funereal display, and had often been heard to argue that the right place for the dead was the nearest spot set apart for burials to the house in which a man might die. 'I hate,' he would say, 'to hear of a poor body being dragged from one part of the country to another, with the nonsensical notion of placing him in the tomb of his ancestors.'

His idea fell in well with the circumstances of the present occasion. His son having died in a hotel, it was necessary that his remains should be removed as quickly as possible, and they were accordingly borne to their last resting-place in *Pere la Chaise* on the same day he died.

From the cemetery Sir Henry did not go back to the hotel from which he had set out on his mournful errand, but went direct to the northern terminus, and from thence to Calais, leaving his servant to settle all his and his son's affairs, and then to follow him to his halting-place.

In the course of a few days he was joined by his servant, and then he crossed over the Channel to Dover, intending to go on to Woodfield and shut himself up in the hall, away from the world and all its delusive pleasures. That, however, was not to be. The passage across the Channel was a rough one, and when he

reached Dover, very much depressed in spirits, he was far from feeling well.

Thinking that he would not be able to continue his journey for a day or two, instead of going to his hotel, he ordered the driver to take him to a private house overlooking the sea, where he had once stopped before, and there engaged rooms for a week. Ere the week, however, had half expired, he was stretched on a sick-bed, suffering from a severe attack of paralysis.

Sir Henry had had a younger brother who married a sister of a gentleman of the name of Cresswell of Elston Court, about ten miles in an easterly direction from Woodfield. At the time of his marriage he held a captaincy in Her Majesty's service, and shortly afterwards was ordered abroad. As his young wife was not then in a fit state to accompany him, it was arranged that she should remain at Elston Court until a certain expected event had taken place, and then go out to her husband.

Unfortunately, within a few weeks of the captain leaving England, it was privately reported that he had been struck down with fever. The sad news was kept from the wife until it was followed by a certified account of his death, when it could be no longer hidden from her. Great was her grief, though the news appeared to surprise her but very little. From the hour

of their parting a strong presentiment had possessed her mind that she should never see him again.

When her friends strove to speak hopefully to her, and remind her that she had still duties to perform here, she would answer despondingly, 'They will soon be over.' And she was right. In a brief space of time the house was in deeper mourning, while to her friends was left the care of a baby boy which she had presented to them a few hours before her death.

For a while it was questionable whether the child was not doomed to lie on the cold bosom of his mother. But a happy change came, and a more cheerful tone prevailed respecting him, and preparations were made for his careful nursing. Fortunately for him, a brief period since, a nursery had been required in the house for a baby girl, the only child of Mr and Mrs Cresswell.

Captain Harewood died possessed of but very little property. Before he left England, he made Mr Cresswell fully acquainted with his circumstances, and left him, by his will, sole executor and guardian of his wife and the expected child.

The condition under which the infant, named at his baptism Edward, was then placed in the hands of Mr and Mrs Cresswell, aroused their

warmest sympathy and caused them very shortly to look upon the little fellow as their own child, and hence the young cousins grew up, as might have been expected, so like brother and sister, that any other relationship could ever exist between them did not seem to enter the head of any one.

Edward's fortune, though small, was sufficient to secure for him a classical education at one of the public schools, and afterwards allow him to spend two or three years at Oxford or Cambridge.

'I believe I shall best perform my duty,' Mr Cresswell said to his wife, 'by seeing that he has a good education, and is prepared to take advantage of any opportunity that may present itself for his advancement in life.'

Hence the course of the orphan's career was determined upon ere he had scarcely left his cradle. In due time he escaped from the nursery, and after having passed through his elementary studies was introduced to youth's public life at Harrow, where he shortly gave proof that, with all with whom he came in contact, he was able to hold his own.

In his eighteenth year he left Harrow for Oxford, and there commenced a successful career at Oriel. Still his correspondence with his good friends at Elston Court was kept up in as warm and affectionate a manner as ever,

and so continued during the three years he spent at college.

Just before leaving home for his last term at Oxford, Mr Cresswell spoke very seriously to him upon his near approach to the time when he would have to commence his work in the great world on his own account, and urged him to think well over the matter that he might be prepared, on leaving the university, to determine on his future course.

There was something in the manner of his mentor that impressed the subject strongly on his mind, and kept it there long after he left him. On one point he was then, and had been long, firmly resolved. He would not give himself up to a life of idleness, even if he could afford to do so ; but that he knew he could not, without the sacrifice of his self-respect, which he valued very highly. He was aware that the greater part of his little fortune had been expended on his education, and that whatever his future prospects might be, his present wants must be attended to.

That Elston Court, which had ever been open to him, would still continue so, he well understood, but he must not rest in idleness there. No ; he would think very seriously on what Mr Cresswell had said to him, and with his or his Uncle Harewood's assistance, seek for employment in London, and make his home in the

midst of his work there. And what kind of home would that be? Thinking over the question, he was surprised to find how nearly the words home and Edith were joined together, and a fear fell upon his heart that if he left the one, it would lead to an everlasting separation from the other.

‘I cannot stop in the old home with her,’ he argued, ‘and, as a sister, I cannot take her with me to a new one. He threw himself into a chair, and pressing his hand to his forehead, sat for a while still and silent. Then a light suddenly breaking in upon his mind, he sprang up, exclaiming as he did so in a tumult of passion, ‘Yes, I can take her with me. I can ask her to be my wife.’

In a moment the idea of his preparation for the examination was cast aside, and the new one engaged all his attention, while he considered what he must do in order to deal vigorously with the emergency that had sprung up so suddenly before him. ‘Perhaps Sir Henry will, if— No, no, I cannot ask him to help me with money. But if I could get employment in a Government office in London, it surely would not require a very large sum to start us in a small house. I will write to Mr Cresswell and tell him of the nature of my love for Edith, and get his consent, that after I leave Oxford I may ask her to be my wife. But let me con-

sider. Would that be fair to Edith? Would it not make me appear very selfish, and as if I wished to bias her father in my favour before I knew she could return my love as I would have it?

In the course of the day his brain became somewhat less heated on the all-engrossing subject, and after much silent debating with himself, he resolved that for the present he would not refer to the change that had taken place in his heart, and continue his correspondence with his friends as of old, until he had finished at Oxford.

When all was settled there he would return home as usual, and, if possible, by some indirect means, discover from Edith herself the real state of her feelings towards him. Had he acted entirely on this plan all might have been well, but, unfortunately for him, he took into his confidence his college companion, Claypole Lyson, a son of the rector of Downend, the parish in which Elston Court was situated. The young men had, especially during their sojourn at Oxford, been on very familiar terms with each other, and therefore when the question was once touched upon, it became quickly one of great and lively interest between them.

Lyson commended his friend for the line of conduct he had determined to adopt. He argued that it would not be prudent, under the

present aspect of affairs, to write to Mr Cresswell upon so delicate a subject, and one which could be so much more freely dealt with in a little quiet conversation when he returned home.

‘A few weeks more,’ he observed, ‘and your position here will determine the name you will leave behind you at Oxford, and that which you will carry abroad with you into the world. Away with all idea of love-making till your work here is finished. Take a good degree, and, with the advantage that will give you, there will be no fear of your meeting with any serious obstacle to the happiness you have in view.’

Such advice, under ordinary circumstances, would have been most commendable in the speaker; but unfortunately, in the present instance, it was far from unselfish, as it came from the mouth of an unprincipled rival.





## CHAPTER II.

 LAYPOLE LYSON had long looked upon the fortune of Edith Cresswell with a greedy eye. It was not that he so highly valued her beauty and gentleness of character, as that his own expectations were small, and he saw no means of bettering his position so safely and surely as by a good marriage. For some months he had been looking carefully around him amongst his friends and acquaintances for a lady whose fortune was at her own disposal, and with whom he might profitably fall in love. Had Edith's fortune not depended on her father's will he would have long since decided that she was very dear to him, and made his attack upon her accordingly. Being a near neighbour, and, during his vacations, very often in her company, he had abundance of opportunities of pressing his suit upon her; but the little hitch about the father's will made him hesitate.

Was it not possible that he might meet with a lady who had no will but her own to consult? In that case he would have no third party to deal with, and that would answer his purpose very much better, as it would save him from any serious and impertinent questions respecting his future prospects. So for the present he resolved to remain watchful but silent. He would not commit himself by any open act to Edith or her father, but, as a friend and a neighbour, he would do his best to make himself agreeable to both of them, that he might at any future time, should his interests lead him to Elston Court, have a favourable opportunity of gaining their attention.

Thus far his hunt for fortune had not been successful. He could not meet with the lady he was in search of. Every one his eye rested upon appeared to be dependant on a father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or some other person equally difficult to please. Edith, against all others, was in the balance at the moment when Edward Harewood entrusted his friend with the secret of his love. From the regard the young men had expressed for each other, it might have been supposed that Lyson's meditated attack upon Edith would have passed away as a thing unworthy of further notice. It did not, however, do so. Edward's confession produced the very opposite

effect upon Lyson's ill-regulated mind and selfish heart. He suddenly found himself desperately in love with Edith, and, while he spoke fairly to his friend, resolved to do his best to make the prize his own.

Feigning himself sick, he obtained permission to absent himself from his college lectures for a week, and, telling Edward that he felt he must go home and get a little of his sister's nursing, set out at once for Downend. Having reached the vicarage, his health was quickly restored, and, while he talked with Edith of Edward's doings at Oxford, he lost no opportunity of making himself very agreeable to her and Mr and Mrs Cresswell. But, cool and deliberate as his actions were, he proceeded very carefully in his attack, and left them on his return to Oxford without the least knowledge of the real object of his visit.

He had more than hinted to his father the advantage it would prove to him if he could, on his leaving college, secure the hand of Edith. To his sisters also he had spoken equally plainly, telling them that if they could speak a good word or two to her in his favour, they would greatly oblige him. The sisters readily undertook the pleasing task, and carried it out to the letter, and, it may be, a little beyond it, for from that day forward, when they were with Edith, scarcely a minute passed

without the name of dear Claypole greeting her ears.

The sisters were fond and proud of their brother, and it required but a little stretch of their imagination to make him appear to their admiring eyes as a being of another and higher sphere, sent into this selfish world by some unaccountable mistake. Absolutely blind to any fault their brother might have, they acted so well up to the charge they had received, that Edith, remembering his attention to her, began to feel a lively interest in his welfare. She did this, perchance, the more readily, as his name was constantly spoken in connection of that of his college companion, Edward Harewood, to whom, as a sister from her infancy, she had been so greatly attached.

Thus it happened while Edward was pursuing his studies at Oxford, and holding his love for Edith in check, that his thoughts might not wander from his work and deprive him of the means of obtaining the high classical honours, the news of which he wished to convey to her, affairs at Downend were being ordered in such a way that, under ordinary circumstances, they would make his next visit there as unpleasant as possible, and show him the real character of his long-cherished friend.

Lyson was getting a little doubtful and nervous as the end of the term approached.

He did not see very clearly how the matter would end, but he was saved from the necessity of inventing a lie to get back to Downend before his rival, by a telegram that reached Edward from Mr Cresswell the day before he proposed to return, to inform him of the death of his cousin at Paris, and the serious illness of his uncle, Sir Henry Harewood, at Dover, and to advise him to go to the sufferer immediately.

With a trembling hand, Edward carried the telegram to his friend, who advised him not to lose a moment before setting out for Dover. Edward attempted to argue that a day or two could not make much difference. That he could take Downend by the way, and get Mr Cresswell's advice for his guidance at Dover.

'You have his advice already in your telegram,' said Lyson; 'and if you are wise you will act upon it. After you have seen your uncle you can return to Downend.'

The confident manner in which he spoke settled the question, and shortly afterwards Edward left Oxford in nervous haste by an express train for London, and then by another on to Dover.

On reaching his destination he found his uncle, though nearly helpless and confined to his bed, perfectly conscious and alive to what was passing around him. He appeared pleased to see his nephew, and asked him if he could

stop at Dover for a week or two. Much as Edward wished to get back to Downend, he could not say no to such a request, and therefore replied, without hesitation, that he would be pleased to take up his abode at the house, and remain with him during his illness.

They had of late seen but little of each other. That, however, had not arisen so much from any difference between them as from the wandering life of the one and the studious character of the other. On his introduction, Edward expressed his warm sympathy with his uncle for the great loss he had sustained in the death of his son. Sir Henry, after thanking him and wiping a tear from his eye, appeared unable or unwilling to enter into any lengthened conversation on the painful subject.

While the invalid lingered on his sick-bed, which he did for several weeks, his nephew completed his twenty-first year, and was by law invested, as Sir Henry, with a faint smile, assured him, with the entire management of his whole fortune.

‘I am afraid,’ replied Edward, ‘that the whole will prove but a very trifling affair.’

‘Trifling or not,’ observed Sir Henry, ‘it is now for you to deal with it.’

Why he took up the subject so earnestly did not appear, but most likely it was to drive away more serious thoughts.

'All in good time, uncle,' rejoined Edward, as he strove to turn his attention to something he began to describe that was then passing out in the bay. But it was not long before he discovered that the sick man's mind was fixed on the one idea that he should at once take upon himself the management of his property, whether little or much.

He appeared to be indulging in some strange feeling of dislike against Mr Cresswell, though that gentleman, had he been apprised of the fact, would doubtless have found it a very difficult matter to assign a cause for it.

Once, years since, in the course of conversation, they had differed respecting the education of Edward, and Sir Henry, although he did not seem disposed to take any trouble himself in the matter, showed that he had formed an opinion upon it, and, as the head of the family, ought to be listened to with respect.

But from whatever cause his dislike might arise, it certainly existed, and day by day it became his constant theme with Edward that he should write to Mr Cresswell, and express a desire that, as their relationship of guardian and ward had ceased, the state of his finances should be explained to him.

At length, more to quiet the growing restlessness of his uncle than from any interest he felt in the matter himself, he made the desired

request to Mr Cresswell. The letter which accompanied it was not wanting in expressions of gratitude for the many acts of kindness the writer had received from his guardian, still to the gentleman addressed there appeared a harshness about the whole proceeding, and made him feel that it arose from the prompting of some one else rather than from the writer's own inclination.

No sign, however, of anger or annoyance was evident in Mr Cresswell's reply, which came the next day, with a short account of the particulars required, and the intimation that the matter was in the hands of his solicitor, from whom a formal statement could be obtained in the course of a day or two.

While this was passing, a correspondence was also taking place between Edward and his friend Lyson, in which the name of Edith was often repeated, with messages sent and answers returned, which had, on her part, no existence further than on the paper they were made to appear to have.

After a residence of two months at Dover, the sick man, worn out in mind and body, passed away. Of his son he had spoken but little. His disappointment and grief at losing him were too distressing to be clothed in common words. In his will he made Edward his sole heir, on the condition that he, the testator,

should be buried at Dover, where his wanderings had ended, without any friends being invited to attend his funeral.

When Edward was no longer required to sit by the bedside of his uncle and minister to his wants, a strange feeling of a want of an occupation seized upon his mind. Until the funeral rites were over, he did not fully realise the great change that had taken place in his position in the world, nor would he so readily have done it then, had not the proof of it been forced upon his attention by almost every one with whom he came in contact.

He listened to his solicitor as he explained the state in which his uncle's affairs had been left with a very unbusiness-like ear, while he was employed in silently working out a scheme by which he might surprise and gratify Edith. He felt that Mr Cresswell would not now object to his proposing to her, and the tone of Lyson's letters assured him of her love. Satisfied on those points, a pleasing idea took possession of his mind. Before he paid her another visit he would go to Woodfield, and have the family seat prepared for her reception, and then ride over to Downend and throw himself at her feet.

He spoke of his project in a letter to his friend Lyson, who in return commended his plan of keeping silent until the alterations

were completed, lest some busy-body gossip should spoil the picture his imagination had painted. Following this advice he hastened to Woodfield, and the work of renovation was earnestly commenced. That no time might be lost, or mistake made, he remained on the spot himself to superintend the work, and impress on the decorator the necessity of haste, as well as the strictest attention to his orders.

Once only he broke through his resolution of not visiting his old friends until the hall was prepared for his bride. His desire to see Edith overcame, as his friend Lyson would have said, his prudence. He could no longer resist the temptation of a ride over to Downend to assure himself that she was quite well. By the way he called at the vicarage, but he did not see Lyson, as the gentleman was said to be not at home.

When in the presence of Edith he was particularly careful to let her see how tenderly he loved her, and yet as carefully to keep from her the least word that would in any manner lead her to surmise the happy surprise he thought he had in store for her. He was only too successful in keeping the real state of his heart in the background, and therefore left her in utter ignorance of his purpose while he was full of hope and joy of his assured success.

And so the matter stood until the hall was

ready for the reception of his bride. When, having seen the last touch given to the beautifying of her rooms, he mounted his horse and again rode over to Downend for the accomplishment of the purpose upon which he had spent so much thought and time.

He was just one day too late. His friend Lyson had, with the assistance of his sisters, managed his love-making so well, that he had proposed to Edith, and been accepted by her. He had acted very dishonestly, and although he was now quite sure of his prize, he felt a little nervous about the explanation he would have to give to account for the deception he had practised on his friend. For the present he resolved not to meet him unless absolutely obliged to do so.

On reaching Elston Court, Sir Edward, as we must now call him, discovered that Edith and her mother were not at home. On being introduced to Mr Cresswell, he fortunately learnt how matters stood, before he had committed himself to any open expression of the object of his visit. His old guardian, who had for so long looked upon him and his daughter in the light of a brother and sister, alluded to the subject of Edith's marriage with Mr Lyson, almost in the first words that passed between them.

Sir Edward, though alarmed and bewildered

by the information that had so unexpectedly fallen upon his ear, choked down his feeling of vexation and disappointment, and remained silent on the subject that had brought him to the house.

The interview was very brief. As Sir Edward was about to excuse himself for being obliged to hurry away, a servant entered the room and presented a card to his master from a gentleman who had called by appointment upon special business.

‘ You will, I trust, excuse me,’ said Mr Cresswell, ‘ if I leave you for a few minutes ? ’

‘ By all means,’ replied Sir Edward; and then, after a moment’s hesitation, he added hastily, ‘ I am myself pressed for time,’ and, as he spoke, he, with a good-bye, hurriedly left the room, and, mounting his horse, rode away homeward in a more confused state of mind than he had ever been before in his life.

He did not draw bridle until his horse stopped panting at the park gate. On entering his renovated house, he bade his servant say if any one called that he was not at home, and then without turning to the right hand or the left, hurried up the stairs, and entering his bedroom, closed and locked the door.

After two or three agitated turns up and down the room, he sat down by a table, and throwing himself forward upon it, buried his

face in his hands, and gave himself up to unutterable despair.

Wearied out at length by his emotion, he sank into a state of stupor, from which for some time he made no attempt to arouse himself. His heart had been struck in its most sensitive part, not only by one arrow, but by three. First, by that which aroused him from his dream of happiness in the companionship of his beloved Edith. Then through his misery in discovering the falseness of his too blindly-trusted friend ; and lastly, from the conviction of the uselessness of all he had done to render his house a fitting abode for his wife.

Well might he press his hands to his forehead and wish he was dead. What had he now to live for ? What could the world be henceforth to him but a prison house in which he must drag out a miserable existence ? Was there a woman he could ever think of again with pleasure, or a man he could trust ? Could he ever look upon his renovated house without having his present bitter disappointment brought vividly before him ?

It was not a mere boyish love that had made him look on Edith as an angel of light, or a weak dependence on another that had caused him to place such implicit confidence in Lyson, and hence the wounds in his heart were the more galling and difficult to bear.

Hours passed away before any sensible change took place in his feelings. All his learning, with the power he had hitherto possessed over his passions, were as dust in the balance to control the effects of that hapless day's work. At length, without any effort on his part, a glimmering of light began to show itself in his almost paralysed brain, and which went on gradually increasing until his thinking powers were to some extent restored, and he could again hold converse with his reason.

Arrived so far on his way to renewed hope, he began to question with himself whether he had not been a little hasty in yielding up his heart so readily to despair. A few words only had passed between him and Mr Cresswell. Was it not possible that there might be some mistake in the information he had listened to, or the way in which he had understood it? Would it be just to conclude that Lyson was the basest of men without further evidence of the fact, or that the last conversation he had had with Edith had nothing in it of the love for him, which the import of her words seemed to convey?

Towards evening he had sufficiently regained his self-possession to change his dress and go down to dinner. Having once passed the boundary between despair and hope, appearances began to assume their usual character, and there being no one but his servants present to observe

his changing countenance, he escaped much questioning, which, had he been surrounded by friends, he would have been subjected to.

Before retiring to rest that night he seriously, and as calmly as he could, reviewed the work of the day, and resolved on the business of the morrow. He would go over to Downend and question Mr Cresswell closely upon the all-engrossing subject, and if he found he had been unfairly dealt with by Lyson, demand an instant explanation from him, or horsewhip him before his father's door. What he should say to Edith he could not tell.

The next morning found him anxious and doubtful, but still determined to act in the manner he had resolved upon.

On reaching Elston Court he learnt that Mr and Mrs Cresswell were out in the carriage, and that Miss Cresswell was alone in the drawing-room. Edith received him in her usual warm, affectionate manner ; while he, not knowing more than he did yesterday, felt that the task he had undertaken would severely try his fortitude. He became confused, and instead of speaking in his old familiar way, stammered out something about the weather and the rottenness of the roads.

Edith looked anxiously at him as she said,—  
‘Are you not well?’

‘Yes—no ; that is,’ he replied, ‘I was not

very well this morning, but—' and then the words, without more preparation, rushed from his mouth, 'I thought I ought to ride over and congratulate you on what your father told me yesterday was about to take place.'

In a moment the gleam of hope that he had misunderstood Mr Cresswell was banished from his mind.

'You are very good,' said Edith, 'to take so long a ride for such a purpose. I was a little disappointed yesterday when I returned home and found you had been here, that you did not stop to congratulate me then. I might have flattered you by saying my father thinks very highly of Mr Lyson, but I have valued him chiefly because he is your friend.'

Sir Edward bit his lips, and said,—

'But why, considering the terms upon which we have lived and corresponded with each other, did I not hear of it before the arrangement was completed? You have never given me the slightest intimation that anything of the kind was ever likely to take place.'

'I have had no opportunity of doing so,' replied Edith. 'You know I was not at home yesterday when you called, and I could not tell you before of that which had not taken place.'

'But surely,' said Sir Edward, with some bitterness, 'if you had desired to let me know that such an event was likely to take place, you

might have done so by letter or otherwise. It is true I have not seen you often for some considerable time, and then,' he added, in a softer tone, 'I have been busy with a thousand things that have kept me away from Downend; but if my correspondence has fallen off, I have sent you messages by Mr Lyson to assure you that my interest in my old home was as warm as ever.'

'Yes,' replied Edith, 'and I have been pleased to listen to him when he has reminded me of you and old times.'

'He told you,' said Sir Edward in a husky voice, 'that I was making some special alterations in my house, which I should be glad to have your opinion upon.'

'He said you appeared to be very busy with your improvements, but I do not remember that he spoke of any special alterations. I suppose you will occupy the house immediately?'

'I did intend to do so, but I think I shall now, perhaps, change my mind and do a spell of travelling first. I have long had a desire to visit Switzerland, and I am told it is now to be seen in all its wild grandeur and beauty.'

'When I was there,' rejoined Edith, 'I was greatly charmed with the scenery, and I shall be very glad to look upon it again.'

'With me?' said Sir Edward, forgetful for a moment that she was pledged to another.

‘No,’ replied Edith, with a slight laugh, ‘that would be a little inconsistent with our present arrangements. But we may chance to meet there.’

‘Your wedding tour will take you in that direction,’ observed Sir Edward, with a great effort to appear calm.

‘Yes, if the choice is left to me.’

‘Which, of course, will be the case. Mr Lyson will not be able to say you nay.’

‘I am not so sure of that,’ replied Edith. ‘Mr Lyson is very good, kind, and considerate, but he may not think it prudent to let me do always as I choose.’

‘But if he loves you?’

‘Yes.’

‘And you love him?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then you will go to Switzerland, and, I trust,’ he added quickly, ‘be very happy.’

Seeing that he was preparing to leave the room, Edith said,—

‘Are you so pressed for time? I expect my father and mother back very shortly, and you know they will be pleased to see you.’

‘I am very sorry, but I cannot stop to see them. You must please excuse me to them.’ Then gently pressing her hand in his, he said hurriedly, ‘good-bye, and left the room.

Edith went to the window and saw him

ride away. As he disappeared she gave a heavy sigh, and murmured,—

‘ He is greatly altered since his uncle’s death. Claypole led me to expect it would be so, but I did hope he would not change with his change of fortune.

Meantime Sir Edward, having gone a few hundred yards in the direction of Woodfield, suddenly checked his horse and turned it towards the vicarage, saying as he did so,—

‘ No, I will not play the craven and run away. I will see him, and charge him with his double-dealing and abominable deception.’

On reaching the house he found, as he then thought unfortunately, that the gentleman he was in search of was not at home, and was not likely to be for a few days, as he was gone to London on business.

He was bitterly disappointed and angry, and as he rode home busied himself with the composition of a letter, in which he would upbraid Lyson for the injury he had done him, and demand instant satisfaction.

When, however, he reached home and sat down to his task, much as he had thought of the composition of his letter, he found it no easy matter to get it fairly set out upon the paper. And when, after several failures, he had accomplished his purpose, instead of placing it in an envelope and sending it off

when he had glanced over it, he tore it into a thousand pieces, murmuring as he did so,—

‘ Why is it that I cannot in a few words say what I feel is the truth, without going in a roundabout way to tell him that he is a thief and a liar ? ’

Then he took another sheet of paper and began his work anew, but apparently with less success than before, as, ere it was half finished, it met with the fate of its fellow. He made one more attempt, and then he threw down the pen, and, starting to his feet, began to pass rapidly up and down the room in the vain attempt to get the mastery of himself.

When not under stormy excitement, his faith in the goodness and justice of the great Ruler of the universe was unbounded. He could argue and feel that, under whatever circumstances a man may be placed, whether pleasant or painful, there is an overruling providence above him which, if it does not order, permits for some wise purpose all that can possibly affect him in his journey through life.

This conviction, which had been deeply engraven on his mind, now for the first time in his life lay in abeyance through the excess of his disappointment. His prayers now took the character of interjections, rather than reasonable requests for guidance. That state of things could not, however, last. Either he must sink

into a state of utter desperation, or the better feeling of his youth return and enable him once more to exercise his reason. Happily his good angel rose in the ascendant, and he gradually became more calm and open to the influence of hope.

Before he retired to rest, he had worked out his perplexing problem, and craved heaven's assistance to keep him firmly to his purpose. He had argued himself into the conviction that his absence from England for a time was forced by circumstances upon him. He would not, however, direct his steps towards Switzerland, but rather in an opposite direction, perhaps through Denmark and Sweden.

Should I persist, he thought, in my revenge for the injury I feel so deeply, I should more deeply still wound the one I most love on earth, without in the slightest degree advancing my own happiness. Edith has satisfied me that it is no forced engagement she has become a party to, but that it is on her part her own free choice.

What could I gain by attempting to prove to her how greatly I have been deceived by the man she loves? Would she now reject him on that account, and even if she did, would it alter our relative positions? Could I, after what has happened, ask her to be my wife? Impossible. I will not think of it. And as for him, must he

escape my vengeance. Yes, even so, I cannot strike him without injuring her; I will leave him to God and his own conscience for the punishment he so richly deserves.

‘I will never, if I can avoid him, see him again. I should despise myself if I could, on any cajolery on his part, be persuaded to think that his love for Edith was so strong before I opened my heart to him that, despite his friendship for me, he could not do otherwise than he has done. For her sake, I will hold back my hand, and if he treats her kindly and secures her happiness, I may endeavour to forget his falsehood to me, but we can never be friends again.’





### CHAPTER III.

**H**E next day, without repeating his visit to Elston Court, Sir Edward sent for his agent, and having instructed him as to what he wished to have done during his absence, set out on his tour. From London he wrote to Mr Cresswell, and through him a few words to Edith, but he did not to either of them enter into any particulars of his plan of proceeding, further than by stating that he proposed to be absent from England for about twelve months, and that they might expect occasionally to hear from him. His sudden and unexpected departure, with the exception of one person, was a mystery to them all, and they too readily fell into the view that that one person placed before them, which was simply that the change in his fortune had produced the alteration in his conduct. Our old friend, he suggested, has found himself master of his own actions, and is able to go

hither and thither as his fancy may direct, without a thought of the attendant expense.

‘It will be very strange,’ observed Mrs Cresswell, ‘if he should fall into the late baronet’s restless habit of wandering about from place to place with no other object than mere personal pleasure.’

Mr Cresswell looked grave, and said with a sigh,—

‘I hoped better things of him.’

Edith did not venture to speak her opinion. She was now, as she ever had been, greatly attached to the companion of her childhood; but she could not help feeling that he had not treated her kindly on his hearing of her betrothal to his friend. She could imagine no cause for it but such as had been suggested to her by his ungenerous but successful rival. Yet to think of him as estranged from them on account of his improved fortune was very painful to her, and to such thoughts she would not give utterance.

Lyson was, as he might well be, in the best possible spirits. He had returned from his business in London in the full expectation of a scene with his rival which would have required the utmost care on his part to keep it between themselves. When he learnt that Sir Edward had had a private interview with Edith, and the next day left the country, he readily sur-

mised the thoughts that had prompted his action. Had he had the choice he would rather have met him alone, and at once have had the matter out between them. But he could not feel sorry that his rival had quietly quitted the field, though he felt that a storm at any future time might suddenly burst upon him. That, however, did not prevent him from giving himself very heartily up to the enjoyment of the present.

During Edward's stay with his uncle at Dover, Lyson, aided by a lying tongue, a fine figure, and the constant praise of his sisters, had laid siege most effectually to the heart of Edith, and won it as far as it could be won from her affection for Edward. Fortune had not been so kind to her, as she had been to him. No thought had arisen in her heart to tell her that she looked upon him in any other light than that of a beloved brother, and when Lyson came before her with all his blandishments, she could not feel any repugnance to his presence, and the more so as he was the dear friend of Edward, and had constantly his commendation on his tongue.

And so all went gaily on. Lyson had found means to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of Mr and Mrs Cresswell. He was, as far as his exterior was concerned, in every respect a presentable man, and he was too

clever in the art of deception to let more than his exterior be seen, even by his nearest friends. His father thought he had reason to be proud of him, and, but for his marriage, would have looked forward without any doubt to his shortly obtaining a fellowship at his college. Had it not been for Edith's chance of coming into a great fortune, he would have argued with his son on the impolicy of crippling his future prospects by taking to himself a wife.

The church, of course, would be still open to him, and, with the influence he could bring to bear upon some friends of the bride's family, he would secure him a good living. While such thoughts controlled the mind of the vicar, Mr and Mrs Cresswell comforted themselves with the idea that their darling Edith would not be far removed from them. They would have gladly kept her with them to the end of their lives, had she not of her own free choice desired it should be otherwise. They felt as all parents must feel who have a beloved and only daughter to lighten their path on to old age, that any cause which might occasion her absence from the family hearth would sadly interfere with their happiness. But they also felt how lonely her state would be if they, in the course of nature, were called upon to leave her unprotected in the world. Sad as it would be to miss her bright face in the house, they

were resigned to the change when they thought that, in her new sphere of action, she would have a companion to guide and support her under every trial in life.

It was a proud hour for the sisters of the bridegroom when they took part in giving the finishing touch to the adornment of the six young ladies who were to act as bridesmaids in the all-important ceremony that was about to take place. They were nearly beside themselves with pleasure when they thought of the pride they would presently feel on kissing the bride and calling her their dear sister. Too happy to indulge in lengthened speech with each other or their friends, all that they could say escaped from their lips in short and pithy sentences. 'You darling girls! How beautiful! How charming! Well, that is lovely,' and so on, till all was ready when they entered the church, and subsided into silent admiration.

The ceremony over there and the breakfast at home, the bride and bridegroom entered their travelling carriage amidst the congratulations of their friends, and were soon lost in the distance. While shortly afterwards Mr and Mrs Cresswell looked around their empty house with a sensation of a chill at the heart, of which they were careful not to speak.

The travellers did not stop in London or Paris, but continued their journey on direct

to Switzerland, where they had resolved, in accordance with the wish of Edith, to spend their honeymoon. After the absence of a month they returned to Downend, and, by the invitation of Mr Cresswell, took up their abode at Elston Court, where they were frequently visited by the sisters and the vicar.

With the ladies all was beautiful and charming. The house and grounds were delightful, and the appointments within and without were all that could be desired by the most delicate appetite or fastidious taste. But the mind of the vicar began to be a little troubled. He feared that his son's views with respect to the church were undergoing a change, as, when any allusion was made to the time of his ordination, he invariably endeavoured to turn the conversation into another channel. This appeared to him so unsatisfactory that he took an early opportunity of speaking very seriously to his son upon the subject, but without any definite result.

Nor was Mr Cresswell altogether satisfied with his son-in-law's proceedings. The conviction had been forced upon him without any special observation that the real character of the young man was not quite so modest or unselfish as it had appeared to be before his marriage. Previous to that he had sought every opportunity to make himself agreeable, but now, when the opportunity presented

itself, he seldom saw it. It was plain he was very fond of ease and good living, and often appeared unaware that he was not in his own house, by the way in which he gave his orders to the servants.

And how fared it with Edith. Had she discovered that she had placed herself in the hands of a man whose character, on closer acquaintance, was not what it had appeared to be when looked at from a distance. Yes ; sad to say, she had in part made the unpleasant discovery. Still there was nothing in his conduct towards her of which she could complain. He bestowed on her neither harsh words nor unkind looks ; but, when alone with her, his conversation became insipid and trifling. She was the first to learn from him that he had given up all idea of preparing for his ordination.

‘Your father will be greatly disappointed,’ observed Edith. ‘He has evidently set his heart on your becoming a great preacher.

‘Then I am afraid he has set his heart upon a vain thing,’ was the reply.

‘And have you quite decided?’ she asked.

‘Yes ; quite,’ and then, after a pause, he added, ‘and you would greatly oblige me if you would take upon yourself to assure him and your father that I am acting in accordance with your desire.’

‘You are jesting with me,’ said Edith ; ‘you cannot mean what you say.’

‘I do, though,’ was the reply. ‘I have my scruples about the church, and I will none of it, and if you will not consent to help me, I shall in that case owe you no thanks. I mean to go in for a Government appointment, and then, at least, you can help me. Your father, I know, has some influence in that direction.’

‘You will speak to your father first,’ said Edith.

‘Perhaps I may; but that need not interfere with your advocacy of my wish.’

A few months afterwards, accompanied by Edith, Lyson was on his way to Paris, in which city, through influential friends, a good appointment had been obtained for him.

It was a dreary night at Elston Court that followed the day of their departure. There were sore hearts in the principal chamber. Father and mother alike in silent grief, able to think of nothing but their absent child; yet afraid to speak of her lest they should add to each other’s pain. Great sacrifices had been made to keep her and her husband near them, but all had been of no avail. They had seen their son-in-law become daily more earnest to put an end to his father’s solicitations respecting his preparing himself for the church, and at length, on the earnest entreaty of Edith, procured for him the appointment in Paris.

Thus ended their dream of keeping their child near them, by marrying her to a neighbour's son who, they had good reason to believe, would follow his father's profession, and if he did not remain in the parish with him, get a curacy at no great distance, until he was in a position to become a vicar himself. And now she was gone far away from them. Yes ; absolutely gone to a great distance to make her home amongst strangers, and, as their secret fears whispered, with a man whose character for unselfishness was not to be relied upon.

Although Sir Edward had acted from the promptings of his better nature, and some may think in a cowardly way, without meeting his successful rival and charging him with his falsehood, the remembrance of his wrongs still haunted his mind, and was not for years afterwards entirely removed. Yet, when he left England he had gone through the bitterest moments of his disappointment. His conscience approved of the course he had taken, and he became comparatively calm as the distance increased between him and his home.

He spent twelve months travelling from country to country and city to city. Much that he saw and heard by the way was deeply impressed on his mind, and doubtless had great influence in his dealing with many actions of

his after life. France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark came under his eye, and numerous entries were made in his note-book of places and events for future consideration.

On his return, he landed at Dover; but not as he had left it a year since, and the reader may be surprised when he is told that he did not land alone. After visiting Copenhagen he went to Berlin, and from thence to Munich, where he made rather a long stay. Almost immediately after his arrival there, he met an English gentleman, with whom he very shortly became intimately connected. On being invited to his house he found he had several children, and amongst them a daughter in her twentieth year—a fair girl so much like Edith in point of age, height and bearing, that when his eyes first fell upon her, the remembrance of his old disappointment was so vividly brought back to his mind, that for some seconds he felt he was living the past over again.

He could not disguise his confusion as he said,—

‘Pray, pardon my apparent rudeness for looking at you so earnestly. You are so much like a lady I knew in England, that I was on the point of addressing you by her name.’

The young lady blushed, and murmured something of not having noticed any rudeness

on his part. When her father came to her assistance by observing,—

‘It is very strange that we should often meet with people so much alike, and yet totally unknown to each other.’

The intimacy which thus commenced between Sir Edward and Miss Burton did not prove of a transitory nature. He found the young lady, on closer acquaintance, so like his Edith, that he felt he had neither power nor inclination to resist her growing influence over him.

In consequence of this, he spent some months in Germany, and when he left, a happy bride went with him, who proved herself an excellent wife, and one well worthy of his choice. There was still a void place in his heart, but it was being gradually veiled from his every-day thoughts.

During his absence from England he kept up his correspondence with his agent, and if his instructions were fairly carried out, he knew as well about his property as if he had been in constant attendance upon it himself.

His promise to the good people at Downend was not forgotten. They received several long letters from him, but he from first to last touched very lightly upon family matters. They were chiefly copied from his notes, and related to the customs and manners of the people with whom he was becoming acquainted. This served to

confirm them in the opinion they had formed of the change that had come over him on his sudden departure. They saw, or fancied they saw, that old domestic ties were hanging loosely about him. That he was fast becoming a man of the world, and preparing for an ambitious race in it. In one of his letters he gave them a brief account of his marriage, with a sketch of the manner in which he proposed to live at Woodfield on his return, which only tended to confirm them in the false notions they had formed of his conduct.

On reaching home he found all in order for his reception. The bright looks of his young wife as she gazed upon the appointments of the house and the beauty of its surroundings were very gratifying to him. Since their marriage nothing was wanting in the kindness with which he had treated her. His consciousness that she stood in the place of another made him the more careful of his dealing with her, lest she should surmise the truth and fear that she did not possess the foremost place in his heart.

His first visit to Downend after his return proved rather a trying affair. He took his wife with him, and as he kept her constantly near him, a great portion of family matters were kept at bay, which, perchance, he would have had otherwise to listen to. While in Denmark he had received an account of Edith's marriage,

### *Extracts in a Dream.*

When her father came

strange that we should often  
see such a case and yet tot-

When this commenced, Miss Burton did not know that she had found the young man so like his Edward, neither taller nor inclining his head in repose over him.

He has, he spent some time with the old man, who, when he left, a happy man, said to him, "I have given you an excellent opportunity, and you have chosen it with care and judgment."

... a place in his heart, but  
he had never loved from his eve-

On his absence from England he  
communicated with his agent, and  
as soon as fairly carried out, he knew  
of his property as if he had been in  
possession upon it himself.

— was to the good people at Dordogne. They received several days' entertainment, but he did not stay upon his visit, as he had copied from the *Archives* and *Chroniques* of the *Archives* of the *Université* of *Paris* and the *Archives* of the *Université* of *Angers*.

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Since their marriage

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so that on the present occasion it was but very briefly alluded to. He learnt that they were still in Paris—that they had paid one visit to Downend, but which was very short, in consequence of Mr Lyson wishing to spend some time in London before he returned to his duties.

It was a great satisfaction to Sir Edward to know that Lyson had left the neighbourhood. Of all men in the world he was the last he wished to meet. He still felt that his confidence had been basely abused, but that an encounter between them was most undesirable. The die was cast—Lyson was the husband of Edith, and any attack made upon him would not fail to lead to an explanation with her, which, under any circumstance, could not add to the happiness of either.

After his first visit to Downend, the foreboding with which he had looked forward to it faded from his mind, and on his future visits he was enabled to meet his friends with the unreservedness of old times.

For awhile after his return, when the complimentary visits he had received from the county families had been answered, he saw but little company. He frequently met his agent, and took especial care to convince him that he was observant of all that was passing. He visited his tenants, and listened attentively to

any suggestions they had to make for the improvement of their farms. Often he might be seen on horseback, with his wife by his side, pointing out to her as they rode through the park or the open roads interesting views of present beauty or spots marked out by old historic events, only now traditionally remembered.

But these rides in a short time came to a close. An interesting state of the lady's health rendered it advisable that she should avoid violent exercise, and content herself with a carriage drive or a gentle walk. Then Sir Edward's visits abroad became less frequent. He spent much time in looking over and arranging his notes of travel, with his wife busily employed with her needle by his side.

At length the interesting event somewhat unexpectedly arrived, and he suddenly found himself a father, with a son and heir to his estate. All passed off well, and shortly his wife was again able to remount her horse. While sounds were heard in the old Hall which had for many a day been strangers there.

As years were gathered to the past, the business in the nursery increased. Following the heir came twins, a boy and a girl, and four years afterwards another girl. With the exception of the firstborn, they all appeared likely to grow up strong and healthy children. Unfortunately

for him, the case was otherwise. It is possible he entered upon life before he was quite prepared for its duties. He was weak in body, and as his mind began to be developed it partook only too much of the same character.

The fond mother proposed to keep her weak child constantly at home, but that, when the time arrived for his education to commence, Sir Edward argued it would not be prudent she should do so. In that, however, in after years he had reason to believe he had not argued wisely. But he did not then confine his attention altogether to his family. In the course of his second year at the Hall, he took his place on the bench as one of the magistrates of the county.

He was not a very earnest politician, though he was ever ready to lend a helping hand to any movement that had the good of the general public in view, more especially if it partook of a liberal character. His decisions on the bench, though strictly just, were always tempered by mercy. It was not so much the crime that had been committed, as the spirit that had led to the crime that met his severest animadversion. He would deal gently with a man who had become a thief through hunger, while he would censure with the whole force of the law another who had been proved guilty of wilful mischief.

As his children grew up his word became

their guiding principle, upon which they did not dream of raising a question. During the season he generally spent a few days at an hotel in London. He would have taken a house there and had his family with him, but his wife disliked the noise and confusion of the streets, and much preferred being in the country with her children, or taking them for a few weeks to Hastings, where her father with his family had settled after his return from Munich.

In this manner they passed ten years of their married life. Then a dark cloud overshadowed the Hall, and Sir Edward lost his tranquillity, and his country for a time the benefit of his active usefulness. Lady Harewood had fallen sick from a severe cold, which shortly became very serious and threatening in its consequence. The first physicians from London were called in, but their skill availed nothing. She was then removed to Torquay for the benefit of the warm sea air, but that was equally useless. She was in a rapid consumption, and nothing short of a miracle could restore her to health. Her end was at hand, and a few days after reaching Torquay, as she had lived, so she tranquilly passed away.





## CHAPTER IV.

**S**IR EDWARD very deeply grieved for the loss of his wife, but his children's welfare still gave him a warm interest in the affairs of his house. It was a relief to him to hear his children speak of their mother, and listen to the thousand questions they had to ask him for her reason for leaving them, and where she was gone to.

He accepted a sister-in-law's offer to come and take care of his little ones, but she ill supplied the place of the departed. Possibly she could not help it, but she was anxious and fussy, and sometimes almost irritating in her desire to have everything kept in the strictest order, so that Sir Edward was not sorry when the time came for her to return to Hastings.

Then, that he might not be worried again in a like manner, he engaged an elderly lady, Mrs Gibson, who had been strongly recommended

to him, to take charge of his children and manage his house. That point settled, he strove to arouse himself from his despondency by interesting himself as formerly in the welfare of his tenants and labourers.

The education also of his children became a prominent feature in his thoughts. The question to be determined was whether it would be better to keep them at home under a governess and tutor, or place them in the hands of strangers at a distance. Mrs Gibson thought they were all too young to be sent away, and at the same time expressed her opinion very freely that she would, for two or three years, be able to teach them all that they would be capable of learning.

With one exception, Sir Edward coincided in her opinion, and that exception had unfortunately to do with Oliver, his eldest child. He had passed his ninth year, and, as his father concluded, required a more robust treatment than he could by any chance meet with at home with his younger brother and sisters under the gentle sway of Mrs Gibson ; and thus it came about that Oliver was sent away to school, where it was supposed he would have every care taken of him by those in authority, and the advantage of associating with boys of his own age and standing in society.

Sir Edward was under the impression that his son's weakness was rather in appearance

than reality. Although he was thin and pale, he had a good appetite, and when he could be induced to forget his natural nervousness, said he was quite well. The gentleman to whose care he was committed listened attentively to Sir Edward's suggestions, and doubtless endeavoured to carry out his views ; but it was not from the master or his assistants that the boy's trials were to come, but from his school-fellows, and chiefly from them in the dormitory and playground.

Boys are not slow to discover the weak points of their fellows, and take advantage of them for their own amusement. This the poor nervous boy soon learnt to his cost. When first teased, he said he would tell his father, which only added to the fun of his tormentors, as they gave him very seriously to understand that it would be a bad day's work for him if he told his father or any one else one word of what took place when the masters were not present. The result of this was that, instead of Oliver willingly joining with them in their sports, he avoided them as much as possible, and to escape their notice would creep away into any empty corner into which he could squeeze himself.

He did his school work moderately well, and when under the eye of a master was comparatively happy, but even then a whisper or a look

from one of his tormentors caused him to tremble with excitement. The mischief did not end at school. He learnt to dissemble with his father through his dread of those whose companionship it was thought would strengthen his character.

Acting on a foregone conclusion, Sir Edward still went on hoping, from one vacation to another, that the desired change would make its appearance, until the youth reached his sixteenth year. Then in utter despair that anything would be gained by his being sent from home, he kept him at the Hall for the benefit of his own personal training.

Meantime the education of his other children was going on very satisfactorily. Charlotte, the eldest girl, when she passed out of the hands of Mrs Gibson, was sent to a lady's school with a daughter of Mr Gordon, the vicar of Woodfield, who was about her age, and to whom she had become greatly attached. Jesse also, the second son, was sent to school, where he was quickly reported to be earning for himself a position at work and play that bid fair to make him at no length of time the captain of his school. The youngest of the family, Grace, still remained under the care of Mrs Gibson, and was reported to be making good progress with her studies.

Sir Edward had fully established his char-

acter in the county as a strict and watchful landlord, but he had in nowise lost his early popularity. His tenants and work-people had confidence in him because they saw he acted on the principle of increasing their profits as well as his own in the management of his estate. If they acted up to their engagements, he was ever ready to encourage them with a friendly word, and if necessary a generous action.

With the general public he mixed but little more than he was obliged by his official duties as a magistrate and chairman of the school board, to which he had been induced to permit himself to be nominated. But he was a frequent visitor to his friends at Downend, where his presence and advice were much valued in the troubles that had occasionally come upon them in connection with their daughter's marriage.

The first year of Edith's married life had done much to disenchant her of the picture she had looked upon through her imagination of Claypole Lyson. For many a weary day after their return to Paris from their first visit to Downend, she strove against the conviction that was forcing itself upon her mind, that it was not his love for her that had brought him to her side ; but, miserable thought as it was, she could not silence it. It was but too evi-

dent that his profession of love had only masked his desire to become possessed of the means of indulging in a life of excitement and pleasure.

Notwithstanding this, he did not give her any cause for open complaint. If he chose to live in a more expensive house than he had hitherto appeared content with, and see more company, he did not suffer her to be worried with household duties, but, with the assistance of a housekeeper, took the whole charge upon himself. Abroad, riding or driving, she was generally his companion, and receiving from him, in the eyes of the world, the greatest possible attention. The position he had taken up, and his connection with the office of the ambassador of England, gave him, at least for a time, the means of procuring unlimited credit, of which he did not fail to avail himself.

Four years passed away after their first visit to England before it was renewed, and then Lyson professed he could go no further than Boulogne with Edith, who was obliged therefore to go the remainder of the journey alone. He seemed to have taken an utter dislike to England; and, although he often talked of going to Downend, this was the lame conclusion it came to.

At the end of a month Edith returned, and was met by Lyson at Dover, to which place she had been escorted by her father, who would

have spent a day there with them, could Lyson have spared the time, but that he assured them he could not, as he must be back again to his office in Paris at work on the next morning. As Mr Cresswell knew nothing of the duties that so earnestly required his presence at his office, he could offer no opposition to their going at once to the packet, which was lying in the harbour, puffing and panting as if eager to be off.

A long space of time again passed, and then, after much talking of another visit on the part of Lyson, and a promise that he would get leave and accompany his wife, nearly the same performance as before was acted over again. The English part of her journey was made alone both ways. When she left Downend on her return, her father would have accompanied her, but as he had a bad cold, she persuaded him to give up his intention in favour of an old servant, who could go with her to Dover.

On that occasion she left her father and mother with a sad heart, though for their sakes she strove to be cheerful. She had not been able to entirely disguise from them that the happiness she felt in their company at Downend exceeded all that she had ever known in the gay society of Paris ; but this not in the way of complaint, but rather in the course of conversation. She feared to trust the secrets

of her heart to their keeping, lest it should make them unhappy in her absence. No ; whatever pain she might be called upon to suffer, they should not be teased to feel and share it with her. Her marriage had been of her own seeking, and she would return to Paris and do her duty.

She had long feared that they were living beyond their means, and on her return to her husband the second time, its evidence became more apparent to her than ever.

She ventured to suggest her fears ; when Lyson laughingly assured her that she need not trouble herself about that, since, if he was not very rich, his credit was good, and that his friends the bakers, butchers, wine merchants, etc., evidently thought they were greatly honoured by being allowed to attend upon him.

But her forebodings were not to be so easily silenced, and she could not refrain from referring to the subject until it became wearisome to him, and produced an angry reply, when she silently left the room.

As she closed the door after her, he muttered,—

‘ I cannot understand what the devil she wants ! My income is good, and may be increased. The tradespeople press one before the other for the honour of serving me, and

none of them, as far as I know, are anxious to close their accounts with me. And suppose we are going a little beyond our tether, England is not so far away, and we have a mine of wealth there in our good father-in-law, who, I imagine, will not trouble the world very much longer with his presence.'

On meeting his wife shortly afterwards, he said,—

‘I am afraid, Edith, I answered you a little roughly just now ; I was busy with some intricate calculations when you spoke to me, and I scarcely knew what I said.’

‘I am sorry,’ replied his wife, ‘that I was so unfortunate as to speak to you when you were so much engaged ; but indeed I am very anxious about the expensive way in which we are living.’

‘My dear,’ said Lyson, ‘have I not told you that I wish you would not trouble yourself about anything of the sort ? You will not be held responsible for any action of mine ; therefore, if you are wise, you will do well for the future to avoid the unpleasant subject.’

‘Yes,’ replied Edith ; ‘but I cannot help thinking of it, though I may obey your injunction and be silent.’

‘Do not say injunction, Edith,’ he rejoined very gently ; ‘you know I merely give it to you as advice. You must see that when two persons,

whose interests are bound up together so closely as ours, cannot agree in opinion on any subject, it is better they should avoid it altogether.'

'Whether I speak or am silent,' replied Edith, 'my fear of the future will be the same if we continue to live as we have done of late, with a house full of friends, or rather, I should say, of acquaintances—strangers of yesterday.'

'But they are all gone now,' was the brief remark.

'And you will not invite others?' suggested Edith.

'Not at present, if it is displeasing to you,' he replied.

'Nor continue your large dinner-parties?'

'Do you refuse to see company?'

'No,' replied Edith, 'not to any reasonable amount. It is the excess that alarms me, and takes me back to an incident that occurred when I was quite a child, and on a visit with my father and mother to some friends in London.'

'If it is a very sorrowful story,' he rejoined, 'I would rather be excused from listening to it.'

'It was sad enough to make a great impression on my father and mother,' she replied; 'but if you do not wish to hear it, I will say no more.'

'Well, I certainly have no wish to listen to

a sorrowful tale, but as you want to relate it, and I daresay will make me listen to it sooner or later, I may as well hear it now and have done with it.'

'I am afraid you give me credit for an amount of perseverance I do not possess,' replied Edith; 'but as I know the incident is perfectly true, and we are, I am afraid, making it applicable to ourselves, I will, though with so little encouragement from you, relate the particulars as far as I can remember them.'

'And as briefly as possible, of course,' said Lyson, with a gay laugh.

'Whether from personal merit, or the influence of friends, I know not,' began Edith, 'the gentleman of whom I am about to speak received an appointment under Government, where he had the charge of stores and of the payment of a number of men under his command. For some years all went fairly on. His accounts were correctly kept, and the duties of his office strictly observed. His inferiors looked up to him with respect, and it was understood that he was in a fair way of promotion to a more lucrative post.'

'Government provided him with a house, in which his wife and children made a happy home. Little by little he grew fond of company and expensive living, and step by step went on increasing expenditure, until it ex-

ceeded his income. Then, unfortunately for him, instead of turning back from his ruinous course, he trenched on the trust money to supply his private need and meet the pressing demands of men in whose power he had by his thoughtless extravagance placed himself.

‘Then he borrowed money to replace that which he had improperly used, and, to complete his misfortune and that of his family, he began to speculate in the funds with money that was not his own, thinking in his self-created blindness that, by a lucky stroke of fortune, he could get himself victoriously out of his difficulties.’

‘And did he do so,’ asked the impatient listener.

‘No,’ returned Edith, ‘on the contrary, he became more deeply involved.’

‘Spent the Government money, and was turned out of office,’ cried Lyson; ‘oh, the rascal!’

‘Pray, do not treat it as a jest,’ said Edith. ‘It was as you say, but the mischief did not end there. He went forth a ruined man to work as a labourer, until death came to his relief. His widow was left a pensioner on her friends, and his daughters brought down from the position which they had looked upon as their own to a dependant state, in which they had to labour to obtain the common necessaries of life.’

‘That was unfortunate for them,’ said Lyson. ‘And now, Edith,’ he continued, ‘I have listened to you, and you in return will, if you please, listen to me while I note a point or two in your very interesting narrative, which of course I understand you meant for my instruction to warn me, as sailors say, of “Rocks ahead!”’ First, then you must know that I have too many sharp eyes to allow me to tamper with any money that is not my own. Secondly, if I have not money of my own, and cannot reach that of other people’s, I cannot do much at speculation ; and thirdly, as we have no children, our daughters cannot suffer from any self-will or blindness of mine ; as for my widow—well, we will talk about that another time.’

‘What! not satisfied yet?’ he said, taking the hand of his wife, who stood pale and motionless with downcast eyes before him. He had not spoken angrily to her, nor said anything absolutely cruel, but as she listened, a change seemed to pass over her and make her feel as if she was at some future time looking back with horror upon the present.’

‘What! not satisfied?’ he repeated in his gayest tone. ‘Come, come, take my word for it, the world is not such an unlucky place as your fears paint it. Of course men have gone astray and suffered, but what is that to us.

We mean to be very careful, prudent, and wise in our generation. We must make a little more show in Paris than we have done, or we shall soon be looked upon as nobodies, and treated accordingly. When we have finally established ourselves, we will go out and feed upon our friends, instead of letting them feed upon us.'

This was the first time since Edith's return that he had condescended to talk to her in any manner, but by a few broken sentences of their household arrangements. He knew as well as she did that his present course could not long continue, unless he could find some means of replenishing his coffers. Fortunately for his wife, the greater part of the fortune settled upon her had, by the prudent management of her father, been so ordered that it could not be touched without her consent. Lyson, knowing the ability of the gentleman he had to deal with when the marriage settlements were being drawn, had avoided anything like a grasping disposition to benefit himself.

At that time the complete picture of vanity fair had not presented itself before him. He saw the path leading to it, and that was all. To get in the path was his first object. He knew that his would-be father-in-law and his wife idolised Edith. Once he had made her his own, every other blessing would follow as a matter of course.

He must manage to keep on very good terms with the old people, and then there would be no difficulty about money matters. He had not then, however, tested the depths of his desire for pleasure, and had nothing more distinctly in view than to obtain without thought or labour the means of spending his life in idleness and frivolity. He had yet to learn that to start on his course dependent on the will of another, would necessitate his holding himself in subjection to that person, and looking to him for guidance if he wished to retain his favour. That he was not prepared to do, as he in his self-conceit talked so masterly to his wife.

Time passed on, and little change was observable in the routine of their daily life. Edith in public wore a smiling face, and wrote cheerful letters home to her friends, but all was not well within her heart. She ceased to expostulate with her husband upon his extravagance. She saw that it was useless, and that for awhile he must be left to himself.

When alone with him, the spirit of home enjoyment departed from her. She became listless, and could not, as he would have had her, respond to his frivolous talk. This was followed by a coldness, which gradually made itself felt between them, and would have ended in an open quarrel had not Lyson been convinced that, to keep on good terms with Mr

Cresswell, he must put up with what he considered the petulance of his wife.

Once when his balance at his bankers was growing miserably short, and his creditors were becoming troublesome, he set earnestly to work to induce his wife to write to her father for money, but with no other effect than to cause her to rise from her chair and leave the room, as she said, 'No, I cannot do that.'

It is very hard, he thought, when left to himself, that a fellow should be so worried with the idle fancies of a foolish girl. I must not request her to write, and I cannot condescend to ask her again as a favour. Yet money I must have, and from my good father-in-law if possible.

Then, without a word to Edith, he wrote to Mr Cresswell to complain to him that a friend in Paris had led him into a little trouble by inducing him to give him a cheque, under a promise that within a month the sum advanced should be returned. That the month had expired, but the promise had not been kept. That he would at once appeal to the law against the borrower, did he not know that he in turn had been disappointed in not receiving a remittance from Rome which he had expected.

The plausible tale ended with an appeal to Mr Cresswell to help him out of his unlooked-for

difficulty. 'I have not,' he wrote, 'said a word of this to Edith, and therefore I shall be glad, when you send me the cheque, if you will be silent on the reason of my asking you for it, as the news of my mishap might worry her.'

When the letter reached Mr Cresswell he showed it to his wife, and after a little debate between them the desired cheque was sent, with some words of caution on the necessity of great care being used in the choice of our friends. 'Bravely done, old fellow!' cried Lyson on reading the epistle. 'Of course I shall be very careful.' Looking about him to see who were the most pressing of his creditors, he set to work with a very high hand. Sent for them, and then having paid their bills, desired them never to presume to come to his house again.

Following this, all might for a time have been well, had not an unfortunate fancy seized upon his brain, and brought a cloud upon his brow. Edith had ceased to trouble him with her cautions, and his creditors were silenced. His invitations out were frequent, and the world appeared in the best possible humour with him. The male part of it very attentive to his wife, but most provokingly, he fancied, she courted the smiles of others when she entirely disregarded his, and this more especially when they chanced to be alone together.

He, full of self, with a desire to have all things pleasant around him, could not understand why she should appear to enter so little into his feelings. Why, when he would have her talk and laugh and sing, she was so little responsive to his desire? Why should she sit at her precious stitching so intently? Why grow so pale and thin? Had he not provided her with every luxury the gay city of Paris could place before her? What more could she want to make her happy, and ever greet him with a smiling face?

Suddenly, from the chance expression of a friend, a new light broke in upon him. The smiles that of right belonged to him were lavished upon another, and that other one whom he dared not, for private reasons, quarrel with or forbid him to enter his house. For the same cause he could not speak to his wife upon the subject, lest she should repeat his words to the man he looked upon as his rival in her affection. Yet he could not entirely disguise his feelings, and consequently his behaviour became most perplexing and distressing to Edith. She could not understand his strange insinuations, as she was as free from any thought that did not become a true wife as he was unmindful of his marriage vow.

Heated with his own vile imaginings, while he set a watch upon his wife's movements, he

plunged himself more deeply into forbidden pleasures. In pursuit of them his office work grew distasteful, and was too often neglected, while his extravagance made him constantly in want of money. He applied to his father for help, and was not ashamed, under a charge of secrecy to his sisters, to get from them almost every penny they could call their own.

Nor did Mr Cresswell escape from further importunities. On two occasions after the one already mentioned, he sent him a cheque. Then he became doubtful of the manner in which the money was spent, and at the same time not feeling quite satisfied with the tone of his daughter's letters, he resolved with his wife to go over to Paris and see with his own eyes the real state of affairs.

He gave them but a very short notice of his intended visit, so that they might not have time to make any great preparation for his coming. He and his wife wished to see them in their every-day mode of life. Whether this was wise or not on their part may be questionable, as they found Edith in a very excitable condition, and looking thin and careworn. But they could learn nothing from her to warrant their active interference between her and her husband. She had too much regard for their happiness to increase their anxiety respecting her welfare.

Mr Cresswell talked very seriously about giving cheques for mere promises of repayment, backing bills for friends, and all that sort of thing, which Lyson, taken aback by his sudden appearance in Paris, listened to with a submissive air, and gave abundance of assurances that, for the future, he would be much more careful than he had hitherto been. He did not attempt, for a very good reason, to show a balance-sheet of his affairs, or give the names of the gentlemen who owed him money.

After a little close observation of his son-in-law, Mr Cresswell thought it better to halt at the point he had reached than to pursue the subject further. Alluding to Edith, he said, 'She appears to be in want of change of air and scene, and we shall be very happy to have her home with us in England for a month or two.'

'But I am not at liberty just at present to go with you,' observed Lyson, and then, after a moment's hesitation, he added, 'and I don't see how I could very well manage my domestic affairs here without her assistance.'

'You need not fear,' said Mr Cresswell, with a curious smile, 'of trusting her with us, and for the inconvenience her absence will occasion in the house, I think we could find the means of helping you to supply the deficiency with the services of a good servant or two.'

‘ You are not perhaps aware,’ replied Lyson, ‘ that the articles you speak of are very rare and expensive in Paris.’

‘ I have read somewhere,’ said Mr Cresswell, with the same curious smile as before, ‘ that every one has his price. Now, you know, I am not a man to prolong a negotiation for the mere pleasure or amusement of talking about it. You wrote to me to say you were in want of money.’

‘ Through my misfortune of trusting men I ought not to have done,’ broke in Lyson.

‘ We will not waste time on that subject,’ said Mr Cresswell, ‘ as perchance it would not prove satisfactory to either of us. I brought my cheque-book with me, and I am prepared to make use of it to help you out of your present difficulty, if you are agreeable, without further question, to let Edith set out with us to-morrow for a long holiday.’

‘ I shall be glad of the cheque,’ said Lyson, ‘ and the more so, if you can put off your carrying away Edith from me for a day longer.’

‘ That I cannot well do,’ rejoined Mr Cresswell, ‘ as I must myself leave Paris to-morrow, and I cannot ask the ladies to follow me without an escort.’

‘ Well, then,’ replied Lyson, with a well-assumed desponding air, ‘ I suppose it must be

as you say, but be assured I shall miss my poor Edith very much.'

Thus the matter was settled. Mr Cresswell wrote out the desired cheque, his conscience a little troubling him, that he was perchance only aiding a profligate on his road to ruin. He felt, however, that it was the only course that was open to him. He could not take his daughter away by any other means, without much deception, or an open quarrel.

Lyson had, on his part, assumed a distress he did not feel, as his jealous heart made him rather exult over the disappointment it would prove to his wife, and her supposed gallant on their sudden separation, while to himself the idea was very pleasant, as during the time he left her at Downend, her father's cheque-book would be the more readily come-at-able by him.

With a light heart, Edith accompanied her father and mother on their departure from Paris. The conversation that had taken place between her father and her husband had not reached her ear, and she knew nothing of their arrangements. Happy in the company of her parents, she answered to the farewell of her husband with kind words, and an hopeful expression of countenance.

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## CHAPTER V.

**T**HAT has been remarked that Sir Edward was a frequent visitor at Downend, where his advice and counsel were much valued in the trouble that had come upon his old home in connection with the marriage of Edith. It was a delicate business for him to speak upon, and doubtless had he not been invited, he would not have volunteered a single word. Chancing to call a day or two before Mr and Mrs Cresswell set out on their journey to Paris, he found them in a state of great anxiety about Edith.

Three years had nearly elapsed since they had last seen her. Lyson had promised many times to bring her over to see them at Downend, and most earnestly so, when Mr Cresswell had written to say, if he could not spare the time for the journey, he would come and fetch her himself. Lyson had no desire to see him in Paris, and little or none to visit him in

England, where he would not only have to submit to be questioned by him, but also by his father and sisters—his wife meantime being dealt with as a spy upon his late actions. So from time to time he wrote, as he found occasion required, to renew his promise of a visit without the slightest intention of carrying it into effect.

Conversations had taken place between Mr Cresswell and the father of Lyson on the promised visits, but nothing had resulted from them but disappointment. The vicar strove to close his eyes to the duplicity implied in his son's conduct, and speak cheerfully of looking forward to the time when all obstacles to the visit would be put aside. While his daughters expressed their confidence that their dear brother and sister would certainly come in a very short time, since Claypole had written to say he was dying to see them.

One of these vexatious applications for money, with a keen remembrance of a late broken promise, was fresh upon the mind of Mr Cresswell, when Sir Edward chanced to make his call. The nervousness of his first visit on his return from his tour had long since passed away, and he could enter his old home without any visible emotion. After listening to Mr Cresswell, who spoke to him alone, and in confidence of his growing fear that his son-

in-law was involving himself in difficulties through his love of what he called fashionable life, and that Edith was not so happy as he had hoped she would be.

Sir Edward had heard something of Lyson's fashionable career, and seeing that Mr Cresswell could only satisfy his doubts by a visit to Paris, approved of his design of going, and advised him to set off on his journey immediately. Luckily Lyson's sisters knew nothing of his purpose, or the gentleman might have been better prepared for his visitor.

Mr and Mrs Cresswell reached home safely with their charge. By the way they had talked much of Edith's life in Paris during the last three years, and put many disguised but searching questions to her, to discover if she had not reason to complain of the manner in which she had been treated by her husband. Had Edith been thoughtless and heedless of their happiness, or let them feel that she had been neglected and unhappy, she would have made them very miserable when they thought how slow they had been to act on their own convictions.

Observing this, she resolved to appear very cheerful, and reply in a general way to their questions, admit that she was sometimes a little tired and weary of her gay every-day life in Paris, but say nothing of the dull dreary feeling that had hung about her heart when she com-

pared her present state with the remembrance she had of her happy childhood. She was pleased to hear that Sir Edward Harewood continued to visit them in his old affectionate manner. As she had had never any reason to suspect that his regard for her was anything more than a brother might feel for a sister, there was no nervousness on her part on her meeting with him when on her visits to her father. Had Sir Edward been questioned on the state of his heart on such occasions, he could not have answered truly if he had said it appeared unconscious of the past.

But when they first met after her marriage, he was without fear of any ill consequences arising from its throbbing. Their positions were very different then to what they were at the time of his great disappointment. Then they were both free as far as marriage was concerned, and any event for the moment appeared possible. Now all was changed, each one had plighted faith to another, and there was no disposition on the part of either to be unmindful of their duty. In Edith's ignorance of what Sir Edward's feelings had been towards her, they could still meet freely on the old terms of brother and sister.

Mr Cresswell had scarcely reached Downend when a letter followed him from Lyson, who professed to be very anxious about the health

of his wife, and how she had borne the journey. A week afterwards, he wrote to say he was very unhappy without her, and that he had very serious thoughts of crossing the Channel to fetch her home, as he found his house was getting into great disorder, and the extravagance of his servants beyond endurance, but on receiving a cheque to cover additional expenses, he was content to leave her a little longer at Downend.

It was a mere pretence to speak of the servants. The extravagance was his own, and the mischief it would end in rapidly approaching. He became less choice in his companions, while more devoted to pleasure. At length whispers were heard that involved his reputation for honest dealing in his office. It was thought that the head of his department would publicly investigate the scandal; but the end in view was obtained by a private inquiry, which brought the disreputable proceeding so closely home to two gentlemen, that they were with very little ceremony dismissed from their employment. One of these gentlemen was Claypole Lyson. When charged with the offence, he met it with an indignant denial, and appealed to his length of service as a proof of his honesty.

His denial, however, failed to convince his superiors. He was told that if he was not satisfied with the private inquiry that had been

made, a public one would be commenced, in which, if he failed to prove his innocence, he would be severely dealt with. He was silenced. He knew but too well how little able he was to meet the charge in public, and, therefore, with his companion in infamy, quietly disappeared.

But he carried one advantage with him. As the inquiry had been private, he could fairly insinuate amongst his friends and acquaintances that he had fallen a victim to the jealousy of some persons who feared he was treading too closely on their heels in the way of preferment. To his wife and her father he wrote in a despairing tone of the event, and wearily complained of the manner in which, after his long and faithful service, he had been treated. But he would not submit in silence. No ; he would bring his case before the public, and cover his enemies with shame yet, finishing by a suspicious request that nothing should be done by his friends at Downend until he could come over and personally explain the matter to them.

His letter to his father ran very much in the same strain, but, as in the case of Mr Cresswell, it failed to produce the desired effect. He had deceived them, or attempted to do so, so many times, that they had ceased to look upon his letters as at all trustworthy. The poor vicar was almost broken-hearted when he contemplated the position in which his son had placed

himself, and that which he might have occupied. He knew not what to advise. His means had been sadly crippled by the constant begging of his son, and he also knew that his daughters were nearly penniless from the same cause, although they were as earnest as ever in believing that their dear brother was greatly to be pitied from having fallen into the hands of so many false friends and secret enemies.

Mr Cresswell having fully satisfied himself that the return of the prodigal to England, in the present state of his mind, could only add to his daughter's unhappiness, took the most effectual means he was able to prevent his doing so. He answered his letter without expressing any opinion upon the matter in question. Said it was unfortunate that his long service should have had no better ending, and then went on to tell him that he had some friends in Canada, to whom he would give him letters of introduction if he chose to undertake the voyage, and that until he could obtain some suitable employment there he would place to his account six hundred pounds, which he could draw quarterly upon in Paris or Quebec, until further notice. Meantime, his wife could remain with them at Downend.

He would have had some scruple in acting thus, had not his daughter's happiness been very dear to him. He saw her, when not

annoyed or distressed by her husband's letters, comparatively happy in her old home, making herself very useful, and showing no inclination to leave it. She had felt that she had no power of controlling her husband's wayward disposition, and although her feelings towards him had not assumed anything like a tone of hatred, she had no disposition under present circumstances to place herself again in his power.

She did not know the depth of the pit into which he had plunged; but she knew quite enough that the tone of their minds was so strangely at variance with each other, that nothing but discord could result from any further attempt to blend them together.

It may look a little like bribery on the part of Mr Cresswell in his placing such a sum of money in the hands of his worthless son-in-law; but the reader will do well not to conclude that such was actually the case. The money value had little to do with it. He was well assured that the prodigal would not then return to England, though, under pretence of doing so, he would be continually worrying him and Edith for money, and thereby keep them in a constant state of agitation.

Had Mr Cresswell thought that his daughter's duty called her to the side of her husband, and that he was not so far gone on his reckless path but she might draw him back, he would have

acted otherwise. He was, however, hopeless of anything of the sort resulting from the sacrifice she would be called upon to make in the attempt. He would give him the opportunity of going to Canada. It might be that a change of scene and circumstance would effect what advice had been powerless to do, and bring about a reformation so greatly needed.

This might have been the case had Lyson been prepared to do his part towards it. But he was not so.

‘Go to Canada!’ he said, with a shiver. ‘The cold would kill me there, and however pleasant that might be to certain parties in England, it would be a dreary finish for me. No; I will not go there. It is too far north. My inclination is for the sunny south, and with the means my good father-in-law will place at my disposal, thitherward will I go.’

This resolution, however, was not expressed in his answer to Mr Cresswell. On the contrary, he spoke of his going to Brest very shortly to secure his passage.

Having received his credit-note, with his letters of introduction, and sent back a reply, he lingered in Paris for a few days, and then took the train for Marseilles. Though he had resolved not to go to Canada, he found that it might interfere with his movements if he remained longer in his present abode, from a hint

he received that some old creditors were likely to become troublesome. Then he wrote to Mr Cresswell to say that, by some strange mistake, when he should have been at Brest, he found himself at Marseilles. That he had not cashed his note in Paris, and would be greatly obliged if it could be made payable in the south, as he was very much in want of change.

Mr Cresswell, with a sigh, made the alteration in the place of payment, and for some time afterwards heard nothing more of his troublesome correspondent. He had reason to believe that his letters of introduction were never delivered in Canada, and that the bearer of them remained somewhere on the Continent, as the quarterly instalment of his pension was regularly applied for at his bankers in Marseilles.

Meantime, while Lyson was thus wasting his talents and opportunities of doing good, time was carrying with it the affairs of Woodfield and Downend in their ordinary quiet course. Sir Edward was still the active magistrate and observant landlord. His seat as chairman at the school board was rarely vacant, and when at home he had his eldest son constantly near at hand, that he might lose no opportunity of arousing him to a sense of his position, and the necessity there was for him to throw off his nervousness, and to apply his mind vigorously to some definite study.

In dealing with the education of his son, it must be admitted that he invariably met with disappointment in the realisation of his wishes. He did not sufficiently understand the character of the mind of his son. He had concluded that it was one that needed an upward pressure to save it from sinking into a hopeless state of dependence upon others. In early life he had felt himself that he was entirely free from a like weakness, but he resolved to rise superior to it.

The struggle had not been a vain one. Year by year saw him more completely master of himself. Opinions and suggestions might come before him, with all the confidence and impulse of youth, or hesitatingly from the lips of failing age, but neither in the one case nor the other was he led astray by appearances. Coolly and deliberately he looked for the truth, and having grasped it, acted on its dictates. To such a state by his training, had it been possible, he would have brought the mind of his son. But it was not possible, and hence his mistake.

The oak must come from the acorn. There can be no grafting it upon the river-side willow. A strong mind may have no difficulty in subjecting a weaker one to its influence; but when it attempts to raise a weak one to its own standard, it can have but one ending, and that a miserable failure. And so it was that, instead

of adding strength to Oliver's character, Sir Edward went very far to confirm him in his natural weakness. When he would have had him meet him with a smile and an unfaltering tongue, he would be met with downcast eyes and a quivering lip. Had the brother, Jesse, been subjected to a like treatment, it would have produced an instantaneous effect; but in his case happily it was not needed.

After many months of home-training, and Oliver had reached his nineteenth year, his father resolved that, however hopeless the task might appear, he would not relax his efforts until another year was added to the past. His girls had given him very little cause for the exercise of his authority with respect to them. Charlotte continued her close acquaintance with Miss Gordon after leaving school, and spent a great part of her time with her in the village, chiefly in visiting the poor and sick. Grace was still in the hands of Mrs Gibson, and it was settled that it would not require more than a year or two from home to finish her education.

Sir Edward purposed that Jesse, when he had finished his school course, should do as he himself had done, spend two or three years at Oxford; but now that the time had come for him to make earnest preparation for his going, an obstacle appeared to be arising in opposition to the plan from the principal person concerned.

In his reading Jesse's taste had led him to books of travel, and for years he had been enamoured with the stories he had read of the strange and wild manners of the people who have for unknown ages scarcely risen in intelligence one degree above the instincts of animal life, save in the art of torture and destruction. Observing the bent of his mind, his father had sought to turn it to account by recommending him to read books in which geography formed a leading feature, that he might understand the many difficulties with which a traveller must have to contend as soon as he crosses the border, in whatever portion of the earth he may be, that lies between civilisation and savage life. Nothing daunted with the task before him, Jesse had seized eagerly upon the books pointed out, increased his knowledge, and strengthened his desire.

Just at that time the report one of our famous travellers had brought home from Africa had full possession of the public ear. Newspapers and magazines had in them long extracts from it, with comments and criticisms of a very flattering character. What could Oxford give in comparison to such a life? True, it would keep his feet in the old path of routine, which had been worn tolerably smooth by the multitude that had passed over it, with but little advantage to themselves or their fellows.

To talk was but the shadow of to do, and he would rather have the substance than the shadow.

‘ My dear boy,’ said Sir Edward on one occasion, ‘ you are becoming quite an enthusiast in your desire to follow in the footsteps of the great and good man Livingstone. But you must understand he did not go out unprepared for his work. He carried with him a knowledge of medicine, added to his missionary zeal, which caused him to be received as a friend by the savage people of the country.’

‘ But all travellers are not doctors,’ observed Jesse in an inquiring tone.

‘ Not all, perhaps,’ replied Sir Edward ; ‘ but I think you must have observed in your reading that the men who had only a slight knowledge of medicine did better than those who had none. For my own part, so convinced am I of its usefulness, that if I had the power I would not let even one single missionary leave England without his having passed a slight examination in the theory and practice of medicine. Think how the matter of leading people to a better state of life was practised in the olden time, when the paths in the Holy Land echoed to the footsteps of the Saviour. While He talked to men of the kingdom of heaven, His acts had to do with the sufferings

of humanity. The poor and the maimed and the halt gathered round Him, because they saw He had the power to heal them. And why should it not be so with the missionaries of the present day, if they went forth fully furnished for their work ?'

' But one cannot be expected to compare one's self with the Saviour,' argued Jesse.

' Still one may endeavour to walk as He walked, and imitate His actions to the extent of one's power. You will perhaps say that His power over the minds of men was infinite, and that He had but to speak the word and health and vigour were restored to the withered limb. But because we cannot heal as He did, is it right to say we can have no power over the diseased limb or the sickness of the body ? Prove to the blind man that you can cure his blindness, and he will not stop to ask you how you acquired the power.'

' But to end the argument, my advice to you is that you embrace the opportunity that is presented to you of spending some months in study at home and then going to Oxford. I do not say that I am most earnest that you should go, because I have so much confidence in your good sense and reliance on your judgment, that I believe you will not wilfully go wrong. If you would rather put off for a time your going to Oxford, and take up the study of medicine and

surgery under some skilful practitioner, I have no objection to offer ; but, acting on my own convictions, I cannot consent to your going forth unprepared to a task, of which you can have but a very poor conception from the report of others.'

Thus the matter for the time ended. Without absolutely determining that he would not go to Oxford, Jesse procured the most popular books on the theory and practice of medicine, and set about his task of reading with lion-like courage. His father so far showing his approval of his purpose by speaking to a chemist of the neighbourhood to give him an hour or two's lesson daily until he could see how far his pupil would be likely to succeed with a more systematic study.

So earnestly did Jesse for some weeks follow up his work that he scarcely left himself time to eat, drink, or sleep. Could he have, without weariness of mind or body, continued as he had commenced, he would soon have been able to convince his father that he was making rapid progress towards the end he had in view. But the intense application of his mind, with little or no regard to the state of his body, seriously affected his health, and thus the business in hand was brought to a sudden halt. The physician who was called in put his veto on the books at least for some time, and directed, in as

far as the weather would permit, the greater part of the day should be spent by Jesse in the open air.

It was now the month of October, and a dry season had just set in. Jesse was as fond of a gun as his elder brother was fearful of touching one, and therefore as soon as he had recovered a little from his sudden attack of illness, he joined the keepers in their daily rounds through the woods and preserves that bounded two sides of the park. He was not a first-rate shot, but he had sufficient skill in the use of his weapon to carry home with him some proof of his success.

In a retired spot near the park, having a belt of lofty elms on three sides of it, about half-a-mile from the Hall, a former proprietor had built a moderately-sized house for the head keeper and his family, with accommodation, by a separate door at the side, for an assistant. The spot was doubtless chosen in consequence of its fitness for pheasant hatching, and that the young birds might have constant attention, so necessary for keeping the woods and preserves well supplied with game.

Of course at that season of the year the lawn in front of the house gave no evidence of the busy scene of fluttering life that might be seen at the close of the breeding season. The careful mother and her venturesome brood were

parted, and no longer visible there. Their call did not echo through the house, or their bright plumage glitter in the sun. They were gone—scattered abroad—strangers to each other.

Still the spot was not devoid of interest or beauty. The front of the house, having a southern aspect, was covered with late-blooming roses, intermingled, or rather having at the sides, jasmine, clematis, and the ever sweet and homely honeysuckle. Around, at a little distance, forming a sort of underwood to the lofty elms, were shrubs and trees of a lower growth, tinted with all the various hues with which nature at that season of the year appears to delight to deck herself preparatory to her winter's sleep. The house was placed on a slight rise at the end of a valley, which ran through the park as far as the eye could reach to distinguish individual objects.

Standing at his front door, with his well-trained ear alive to every sound that floated through the air, by night or day the keeper had little difficulty in deciding to what part of the grounds he should direct his steps to meet with any stranger, whether man or beast, who had dared to invade his domain. The present occupier of the house was a strong, hale man, who had not yet reached his fiftieth year.

His father had been head keeper under the

late Sir Henry, and he had been employed on the estate from his youth. First, as a boy at every one's call, then as under keeper, and further, on the death of his father, in his present influential position. His character for uprightness and strict attention to his duty was so strongly impressed upon his assistants, and so well known throughout that part of the country, that it was a rare thing for a poacher to give him any trouble. The chief pleasure and ambition of his life appeared to consist in keeping up a good stock of game, and attending Sir Edward and his friends over the estate.

Within doors he was surrounded by a young family, and a bustling wife a few years younger than himself. Four out of his five children were of school age, and constant in their attendance at the village little temple of learning. The fifth, a short, chubby fellow, just able to toddle about, was kept at home generally, hanging about his mother, but nominally under the charge of Miss Lizzie Montag, a young person who had, when quite a child, been placed under the care of the mother of the present keeper.

Shortly before his mother's death the keeper married. His wife and Miss Montag were well suited to each other. The elder one had early and carefully been taught the duties that pertain to the management of an English

home. Of that she soon gave full proof in her own house, which was always a pattern of neatness and order. Miss Montag was, of course, fully under her influence, and happily she had no desire that it should be otherwise. Possessed of a bright, sunny face and a cheerful disposition, discord had found no place to struggle in between them.

Whatever Mrs Smith might say or do never brought more than a thoughtful look over the countenance of her companion, and it must be confessed that she had not always been very complimentary in her remarks on the manner in which certain portions of the day's proceedings were to be carried out. A splash on the glass, a spider on the wall, or a beetle on the floor, was an abomination, and sent her with brush and duster to attack it, with an energy known only to few in this dreamy world.

Miss Montag took reproof without contention, and consequently the two became greatly attached to each other, and many a pleasant walk did they take together, accompanied by a troop of children, who, having finished school for the day, could not rest a moment in one place. At one season of the year they were chasing the butterflies from flower to flower, and at another blacking their hands and faces with the blackberries so abundant on the bushes.

At times the father would suddenly come upon them from an opening in the wood, and then a burst, or rather scream, of pleasure would echo around, and cause the birds to hurry away in a confused flutter of surprise and fear. Sometimes, instead of the father it would be one of the under keepers, when there would be a little ceremony gone through between him and the elders, while the children pressed around him to ask him a thousand questions about the hares and rabbits in the woods, and whether any one had been able to catch the squirrel alive they wanted so much.

Such a catch, however, was not likely to take place, as Mrs Smith had secretly forbidden it. Squirrels were all very pretty, she would say, on the trees at a distance, but she would not have them alive in-doors, dirtying the house and, perchance, biting off one of the children's fingers.





## CHAPTER VI.

**P**HILIP LEA, who was now the tenant of the part of the house apportioned to the under keeper, had not been long in his present situation, nor did he appear particularly fond of it. When in the village school he had obtained the special notice of Sir Edward Harewood by some ready answers he had given him in his class, and as he was the son of his personal attendant, out of respect for the father he continued to notice him, until at length he removed him from the village to a boarding-school at a distance, with a view to his future advancement.

The youth had thus a career opened before him, which, if he had taken advantage of, and his moral perceptions had been equal to his mental ability, he might have become a distinguished man. He was ambitious, and gained many prizes in the classes through which he rapidly passed, and might shortly, with Sir

Edward's assistance, have worked his way up to the university, had he not betrayed a kind of pride which his patron could in no wise sanction.

On his occasional visits to Woodfield during his vacations, Sir Edward was in the habit of inviting him into his library, bidding him take a seat, sitting down himself, and conversing freely with him. This treatment affected the youth's brain, and he grew giddy and self-conceited. He did not, however, cease to endeavour to make himself agreeable to his patron, but he unceremoniously gave his father the cold shoulder, and looked upon his old associates of the village school with supreme contempt. When it needed but one step for him to grossly insult his father, his conduct came under the notice of Sir Edward, who did not fail to take him seriously to task upon the subject, and to point out to him how inconsistent it must appear if his advancement in mental pursuits should make his moral duties less binding upon him.

'Ignorance in any case is to be deplored when it acts injuriously on the human race,' he remarked. 'But the ignorance of their duty that is sometimes unhappily displayed by children towards their parents is, to speak only lightly of it, most despicable. Is it any disgrace to you, do you think, to have a father who has

not had the benefit of a classical education, when that father is filling his allotted place in life with credit to himself and advantage to his employer? I had hoped better things of you, Philip, and I must beg you will now go at once to your father and ask him to pardon you for the courtesy you have shown him, with an assurance that you will be more careful of your duty for the time to come.'

Philip bit his lip, and answered submissively, but he did not go to his father in the child-like manner indicated to him. No, he went with a complaint that he or some one else had been chattering to Sir Edward about him, and that he would thank him not to do it again, or he might have reason to be very sorry for it. Having delivered himself of his ungracious speech, he bounced out of the house and did not return again for many days. 'I am resolved,' he muttered, 'not to submit to such dictatorial treatment, even from Sir Edward himself. I daresay it will not be to my interest to quarrel with him, but what can I do to help it if he talks to me in such a way? So far he has helped me, no doubt. But why has he helped me? He would have me understand that it was out of respect for my father. Why did he not do it, then, before he discovered I had something more in me than most other boys? I wonder if it was my mental abilities

or my moral qualities that caused him to notice me? No, I don't wonder at all. I know if I had only been what he is pleased to call a good boy, he would simply have patted me on the head and left me in the common crowd.'

With such a spirit animating his breast, darkness fell upon his soul, and he could neither speak nor think aright. A frown settled on his brow, while murmurs of discontent escaped from his lips. He resolved he would have no more of school. Was he not eighteen years old, and could he not get his own living without being beholden to any one? He would try. He wrote a few lines to Sir Edward to thank him for his past kindness, but he spent sometime thinking of its necessity before he could condescend to put pen to paper, and only brought himself to the point of consenting by considering that it was the right thing for one gentleman to do to another.

'No more school for me,' he repeated, as he packed up the few things he could call his own, and without waiting for an answer to his note, or giving his father or grandfather, who also was in the service of Sir Edward, the slightest intimation of his purpose, he took a third-class ticket at the station, and set out for London. Besides the property he carried in his portmanteau, he had about thirty shillings in money, and, upon the strength of that, he was on his

own account to start in the race of life amidst thousands of competitors as eager as himself, and who had not left a straight path to encounter the dangers of a crooked one.

Doubtless many a youth has started on the road to successful fortune with less means than he had at his disposal, and in due course has arrived at the end of his journey. But it was not so with him. Still he made a resolute attempt. Stopping at a coffee-house in a narrow street near the London Bridge Station, he secured a bed for the night, and a safe place in which to bestow his property while he went out in search of employment, of what kind chance must determine.

As he was going down a busy street looking at the shops to see if there were any notices posted up of assistants required, he saw in a stationer's shop window, amidst the articles offered for sale, a paper, on which was written, 'A lad wanted here.' Stepping boldly in, he was received encouragingly by the master, and in answer to his inquiries of where he came from, if he had a father, etc., was obliged to fence about a little, and not stop short of what he was willing to think was only a white lie or two. A customer coming into the shop, the master stopped from his questions, and said, 'If you will call to-morrow morning and bring your father with you, I will see you again.'

'Thank you, sir,' was the reply. As he left the door he muttered, almost loud enough to be heard above the din in the noisy street, 'Bring my father with me? My father! A plague take him. I think he was sent into the world only to get in my way. Coffee, with a roll and butter, is all I can afford to-night,' he thought, as he entered the door of his temporary home.

The next morning he was about betimes, and looking eagerly over the lists of advertisements, that appeared to him to nearly fill the papers, he saw several youths were wanted in different parts of London; but there was generally a word or two at the end of the notice not at all agreeable to look at. He took down some of these, and having again indulged in coffee, roll and butter, he sallied out to see the master of the shop who had invited him to call again. He had put together a few sentences by which he might account for the absence of his father.

By some unaccountable neglect on the previous evening, he had forgotten to look at the name of the street or the name of the person he was going to see. He thought he could go straight to the shop, but after wandering about unsuccessfully for a couple of hours, he was obliged to give up his search in despair of ever finding the place again.

Then, with his list in his hand, which he had

taken from the papers, he set out on his new mission ; but from his little acquaintance with London, he made streets that lay close together very far apart by the roundabout way he went from the one to the other. More than once his appearance seemed to make a good impression upon the gentlemen on whom he called ; but when he hesitated respecting the references they required, he was politely told they would write to him if they should require his services.

This kind of answer, he was not long in discovering, meant a simple dismissal. So from day to day he went on for a week, because he would not bring his father on the scene. ‘And suppose I did send for him,’ he thought, ‘what could it profit me ? He is only a servant, and his presence would cause me to be snubbed out of the office.’ He had no good angel to whisper in his ear that, if he did not like his father’s position, it was for him to continue in the path of duty, and, by his exertions, remove him from it instead of wishing to forget that he had a father.

At length fortune seemed to smile upon him. In the second week of his life in London, when his money was nearly gone, and he was becoming more desperate every day, he entered, from an invitation in the window, a showy establishment which appeared to have been just opened

for the management of some very profitable gold mines in South America. After a little conversation with the manager, he was engaged on the spot as a clerk, at a salary of a pound a-week.

Something was said about his leaving a deposit as a guarantee of his honesty and good behaviour, but when he was obliged to confess that he had no money, and did not know where to go for any, he said he was willing a part of his weekly salary should be held in hand, and forfeited at any time if he should be found neglectful of his duty.

After a little demur on the part of the manager, his terms were accepted, and he was immediately installed in his office. He soon learnt that the establishment was in its infancy, and that a great part of his duty would consist in his assisting the principal in its careful nursing. The gentleman with whom he was brought into such close contact seemed to him to know everybody and everybody's business. He was a short, stout man, about forty years of age, with a well-trimmed beard and very carefully dressed. Black hair and dark, sharp, searching eyes, and generally of a very confident bearing. He spoke as if he could command the world from the great experience he had had in its working. A few words with Philip had shown him that he was just the

kind of youth he wanted, and hence the little difficulty in his engagement.

His chief work consisted in his preparing advertisements for the newspapers, folding up notices of the splendid mine that had been discovered, and directing them to ladies and gentlemen all over the country from the lists of railway stock holders, of which there was no want in the office. He was surprised to find that he was the only regularly established clerk in the place. Men occasionally came in, some very showily dressed, and others in threadbare attire, who evidently belonged to the concern ; but they did nothing more than look over some printed papers, ask a few questions, and go into the manager's private room, or lounge back again into the street.

A few days served to show the young clerk that his visitors were the managing committee, so much vaunted in the prospectus for their position and ability to control the affairs of the company, which was calculated unfailingly to pay at least fifty per cent. as soon as the mine could be got into fair working order, and until that could be accomplished, six per cent. was guaranteed to all subscribers.

Philip had learnt something of bubble companies in the newspaper reports, and he was shortly convinced that he had found employment in one of the most promising of its kind.

But, bubble or not, he agreed with himself that it was no business of his. 'I must live,' he thought, 'and if they will not have me in a house built on a rock, I must do the best I can in one built on sand.'

'I think,' said the manager one day to him, after he had been nearly a month in his office, 'you have given me good proof that you can be trusted, and therefore I need not in future make any deduction in your salary.'

'I am glad to hear you say so,' said Philip, 'as I have some trouble under our present arrangement to keep out of debt.'

'Are you in want of money?' asked the manager.

'Not absolutely in want,' was the reply.

'If you are ever,' began the manager, 'you can'—he then suddenly stopped, and, after a pause, said, 'By-the-bye I may as well let you have what I have of yours in hand.' Then opening a well-filled purse, he continued, 'I see I have nothing less than a five-pound note. You can take that, and let me have the change in the course of the day.' He then, with a smile of confidence, turned away and entered his private room.

In a moment his bell rung, and Philip followed him in.

'I am a little awkwardly situated,' he said. 'I forgot to ask Mr Maitland and Mr Spence

to sign their names on the papers they have left with me. It is of no great moment, but I like to have everything in order. Just put their names down here for them. I see you have your pen in your hand. You need not be particular to stop for careful writing, any scratch will do.'

Philip moved towards the table. He had no hesitation about doing as he was required. There did not appear anything very noticeable in the transaction, as he was copying out names from one list or another in his office work the greater part of the day. The manager was very busy, and in a great hurry to have the signatures affixed. But as the old proverb has it, 'the more haste the less speed.' In pointing to the papers on the table, he knocked the steel pen out of his clerk's hand and damaged the nib.

The clerk was turning to get another, when his employer said impatiently, 'The one you have will do. You know it is only a mere matter of form;' but here he added, when one paper was signed, 'here is a quill pen, use this.' When the clerk returned to his own desk he was not at all satisfied with his late performance. He had written disgracefully, in characters which he thought no one could read.

From that time his office work, while it lasted, was made very pleasant by the com-

mendations of his chief, and he began to think that he was in a fair way of getting a few of the feathers out of the wing of the wild goose he had in the first week of his disappointment in London felt he had set out in search of.

The bubble in which he was taking a part was only too successful in alluring victims within its grasp. Some thousands of pounds from persons who could ill afford to lose them fell into the rogue's hands. When it was too late to recover much that was gone, some of the victimised, becoming alarmed, got together a few of their fellow-sufferers and formed a committee of investigation, and proceeded to the office. There they found the young clerk, but neither manager nor committee men.

Most of the parties named as committee men disappeared into shadowdom, for the simple reason that they had never had any real existence. Luckily for the ends of justice, the chief mover in the affair was caught with a large sum of money in his possession as he was quietly preparing to quit the country for some distant land, where he could enjoy the fruits of his plunder.

Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled. The self-willed young clerk found to his cost that he could not. From his being found actively engaged in his office, a warrant was

obtained for his apprehension that he might be secured while the investigation was proceeding. This proved a sore trial to the young clerk. From the office to the police court, from thence to the prison van, and from the prison van to the house of detention, were but so many short stages to the solitude of a cell, where no friend would visit him, and where he must be utterly helpless, while he could form no idea even of the nature of the charge that would be brought against him.

He had taken knowingly no part in gulling the public. What he had done, he argued with himself, he had done as an official under the direction of his superior, and was he to suffer because his superior was a great rogue? On one point only could he feel any satisfaction as he ruminated in his cell on the strange accident that had befallen him. On his entrance into London he had dropped his own name, and taken that of William Wright. That would keep the knowledge of his mishap from his country friends, and save him from being obliged to listen to their pity or advice.

This poor consolation lasted but for a brief space. On his next appearance in the police court, the presiding magistrate, observing his youth, and that he was undefended, having heard his account of how he had become acquainted with the concern, advised him to lose

no time in communicating with his friends, that they might employ counsel to defend him.

Hesitatingly he thanked the magistrate, and then added, in a more assured tone,—

‘I do not think I want counsel, and I have no friends in London.’

‘But you have in the country, I suppose,’ said the magistrate. ‘Let them be written to.’

‘I would rather not write,’ murmured Philip.

‘Where are they to be found?’ asked the magistrate.

Philip, to preserve his secret, was on the point of giving a false address, when the thought struck him that if he did so, inquiry would be made, and he would be found to have told a lie, he therefore remained silent.

The magistrate looked doubtfully upon him, but he merely said, ‘You do not appear to understand the position in which you are placed,’ and then added, ‘the account you have given of yourself may be very true, but the affair with which you are proved to have been connected is of too serious a character for you to expect any one to believe you without further knowledge of you. At the request of the prosecutor you will be remanded for a week.’

During that week the youth’s confidence gradually merged into doubt. Then he asked if he might see the police inspector who had charge of the case, as he wished to make some

communication to him. The unpleasant conviction had forced itself on his mind, that he would be in the end compelled to say who he was and where he came from, and therefore he might as well do it at once.

The inspector shortly appeared, and having warned him that if he chose to speak, he would listen to him, but all he said he must write out at length, and it might be used against him.

‘I am in a fix,’ was the reply, ‘and I don’t quite see how I can get out of it without your knowing a little more about me than I care to tell you.’ He then, after a little hesitation, gave him a correct account of himself, and where his friends were to be found.

‘I hope you have told me the truth,’ observed the inspector, as he was about to leave the cell. ‘Of course, you will expect me to communicate with your father.’

‘It cannot be helped, I suppose,’ was the reply.

The subject of the gold mine deception was becoming a very interesting topic of conversation with the public, from the fact that so many persons had suffered in cases nearly as bad. This had a stimulating effect on the police, and determined the inspector not to lose a moment in testing the truth of the story he had just been listening to, and he was therefore soon in a fast train on his way to Woodfield.

Nearly two months had elapsed since the wayward youth took his departure for London, and to the many anxious inquiries that had been made respecting him, nothing but disappointment had resulted. The father felt very deeply the contumely with which he had been treated, and yet so fond and proud of his son was he, that he was ever ready to turn a deaf ear to any one who would, with unstudied words, censure his conduct.

Even Sir Edward did not feel quite at his ease when he heard of the youth's sudden disappearance. He could not be sorry that he had spoken plainly to him, but he felt that he might have clothed his ideas in gentler words than he had used.

After a little conversation with Sir Edward, the inspector's mind was clear upon the subject of the youth's departure from home, and the reason of his assuming another name in London. Within an hour the inspector was on his return journey, with instructions from Sir Edward to use his best endeavours to discover in what manner the youth had been living while from home, and the kind of company he had kept.

The poor father, upon hearing that his son was in prison, would have instantly set off to visit him, had he not been restrained by Sir Edward, who, though fully aroused to the awkward position in which the youth had placed

himself, was less excited as to its consequence. 'I do not think,' he said, 'it would be right for you to attempt to see your son at present. You will do better to leave the matter in my hands until we are fully acquainted with the particulars of the case. I will write to my solicitor, and beg him to take such steps as he may deem necessary for the defence of your son. If, as I trust, he is not criminally mixed up with the affair, you can have no cause to fear that he will suffer more than a few days' imprisonment in the house of detention.'

The poor father was silenced, but not convinced, that his duty did not call him to the side of his son.

At his next appearance at the police court, Philip was confronted with his late employer, and the prosecutor being satisfied that he was not one of the guilty party, but that he had been a mere tool in their hands, placed him in the witness-box to secure his evidence against the real culprits.

It was not a case to be finished at one sitting of the magistrates. They had doubtless the principal in custody, but the police wanted longer time for inquiry, as it was supposed he did not stand alone.

Sir Edward, on the pressing entreaty of the father, that he might be present at the next examination, had consented not only to let him

go, but to go with him himself. Trembling with excitement, the father on his first interview with his son, forgetful of his past undutiful conduct, was very eager to be bound for him that he might at once be set at liberty, but Sir Edward, fearing it might lead to further unpleasantness between them, would not suffer him.

He had satisfied himself, from the inspector's report, that the youth had not been leading an immoral life while in London, and therefore secretly resolved to give him one more trial at Woodfield. With this view, he offered himself as security for the youth's appearance at any time he might be required.

In the course of time the principal of the bubble company was committed to Newgate, where he was tried and found guilty, which freed the witnesses from any further attendance on the case.

Meantime, Sir Edward had taken back to Woodfield his runaway *protégé*, who had become sensible by his week in the house of detention of the mistake he had made. It had proved a severe blow to his pride, and caused him to feel that he was under great obligations to his patron, and must, for the present at least, appear grateful.

Just before the trial, one of the under keepers fell ill, and Sir Edward, thinking that plenty of

out-of-door exercise would assist in restoring the youth to his senses, requested him to take the vacant gun, and go down and assist the head keeper. Like most young men, he was fond of a gun, and therefore he had no scruples about undertaking the duties required of him. The sick man went on from week to week declining, and then died.

The worrying business of the trial was then over, and it became a question whether Philip should continue for a year or two in his present situation, or some office work at a distance be sought out for him. Thus stood the question, when, as one of the under keepers, he was introduced to the reader, coming out of the wood to answer the children's questions about the game, and the squirrel he had said perhaps he would catch for them.





## CHAPTER VII.

**W**O persons coming up a lane into the main road at Woodfield halted at the corner, and one said to the other, 'We must part here. Our walk has taken us longer than I expected it would, and I was to meet Mr Smith at the end of the village before I returned.'

'Can I not go with you?' asked the gentleman spoken to.

'No; it is getting late, and Sir Edward will be expecting you home. If you go through the churchyard, and run across the field into the park, you will be there very soon.'

'I don't like the way across the field now, it is dark.'

'Then go round the road; it is not far that way.'

The speakers were Mr Oliver Harewood and the personal attendant of Sir Edward, George Lea, the father of the youth Philip.

Without further comment they parted, Lea went on his way to complete his mission, while Oliver walked slowly on towards the church. He could see its outline in the distance. It was a very ancient structure, with a square tower, long nave, with two side aisles, and a lofty chancel.

A neat gravel path led through the yard, on either side of which were stones of all colours, shapes and sizes, many of them bearing the deep impress of age, and all showing that they had been subjected to the destructive influence of sun, wind and rain. Some, what with sinking in the old earth and having the new heaped around them, had almost disappeared beneath the surface; while others, having lost their upright position, were bending over east, west, north and south, with more variety of inclination than our time will suffice for description. Then there were solid blocks, which had been raised some four or five feet above the graves, but even they were yielding to the hand of time.

Oliver, on finding himself abreast of the church, looked back to see if he would be likely to have a companion up the dark road, made gloomy by a row of trees on either side; but he could see no one, nor hear the sound of even a distant footstep. 'I think I will try the field,' he murmured. 'I shall soon be in

sight of the light in the hall. The path is wide through the yard, and I will keep my eyes close down upon it.' With trembling limbs he passed in at the gate, and was nearly half way through the fearful place when he was startled by a groan which, to his excited imagination, seemed to come from a new-made grave.

A cold shiver ran through his frame as he involuntarily raised his eyes to heaven. At that instant he was passing by one of the old solid tombstones upon which, to his horror, he saw a figure clothed in white sitting motionless. For a second he stood transfixed to the spot, and then seeing the right hand of the figure was raised and stretched out, as if about to seize him, he rushed forward and flew rather than ran over the remaining part of the yard, and then across the field and park to the house, at the door of which he fell down exhausted.

How long he lay there insensible no one knew. When his late companion reached the spot, he found him just recovering consciousness, and in a fearful state of excitement, as he cried out,—

‘ Oh dear ! why did you make me come home alone ? ’

‘ Have you fallen down and hurt yourself ? ’ asked Lea.

‘ I don’t know. I think I have. How did you get here ? ’

‘I came across the field,’ replied Lea.

‘And through the churchyard?’ said Oliver, shivering.

‘Yes.’

‘And what did you see there?’

‘Nothing more than usual.’

‘Not on the high stone by the path?’

‘No; why do you ask? Have you been frightened?’

‘Yes; but you will not tell my father.’

‘What did you see?’

‘I cannot tell you now. Another time I will. Let us get in doors. It is so dark here, and I fancy I can see all sorts of things.’

‘Why, Oliver,’ said his brother, who happened to be crossing the hall as the two entered, ‘what is the matter with you? You are looking as pale as a ghost.’

‘Who said I saw a ghost?’ cried Oliver.

‘No one that I am aware of,’ rejoined Jesse, laughing. ‘I said you look as pale as a ghost, and you do not look much better,’ he added, turning his attention to Lea. ‘What have you two been about?’

‘I am not well,’ said Oliver.

‘Shall I send for a doctor?’ asked Jesse.

‘No,’ replied Oliver, as he hurried upstairs to his room.

‘Now, old fellow,’ said Jesse to Lea, ‘just

have the goodness to tell me what scene of danger you have escaped from.'

As Lea hesitated to reply, Sir Edward, who had heard the sound of voices in the hall, called out from the library,—

‘Is that you, Oliver?’

‘He has just gone to his room,’ said Jesse.

‘I have a little reading to do with him,’ remarked Sir Edward, ‘but the evening will give us time for that. As you have just returned from Downend, I will first hear your report of our good friends there, and then we can make arrangements for our day in the woods to-morrow.’

‘Poor boy!’ sighed Lea, as he retired unnoticed from the hall, ‘I am afraid, instead of his growing stronger, as his father would have him, he gets weaker and more timid every day. What will be done here when he is master who can say. I am afraid to think of the change that must take place.’

With a look as despairing as his thoughts, he disappeared by a door that led to the domestic offices, and the hall was again left empty and silent.

The stairs, with their carved balusters, up which Oliver had gone, were of a massive character, like the noble hall from which they rose. Old family portraits, that had been crowded out of the rooms in all parts of the

house, were hanging on the wall, and had greeted him with their smiles and frowns as they had done for ages past any one passing up or down. Unsettled in their early positions, they had moved from room to room until they reached their present place of rest, ever smiling or frowning, as they had done when the last finishing touch was applied to them, undisturbed by any passing event or courtesy to which they might have been subjected.

Apparently satisfied with themselves, they were very interesting to look upon; but how different were they from the reality, of which they had never been but the faint shadow? Where were now the beautiful forms, with their smiles and frowns, as they sat before the painter? Alas! in the family vault, mouldering away into dust. The canvas shows them at their best; but when in life was there never aught but satisfaction on their countenances? Was there never a cloud on their arched brows, or tears in those smiling eyes, as they moved through the hall or passed up from floor to floor, brooding over the changing nature and unreality of all things around them? Did anger never distort those lovely lips, pale the tinted cheeks, or speak daggers from those soft and gentle eyes?

Or the gentlemen, with flowing wigs and clothed in ermine, judges of the land, that ere

now had restored the falsely accused to liberty or sent the guilty to his fate. Did they, when in life, always wear the same calm, unruffled features? Did they never, on these very stairs, turn to curse their servants or chide with harsh words their wives and children? Or the warrior, clothed *cap-à-piè*, for battle. Did he always wear that fierce, undaunted look? Was there never a quivering at his heart—never a stain on his cheeks made by affection's tears?

And the children, were they always so good and kind as here represented? Did they never raise a hand in anger to strike a brother or a sister? or with scornful gesture treat a parent with disrespect, ay, in this very hall in which we are now standing?

Poor, faint outlines of surface humanity, you teach us a stern lesson, if we would take it to our hearts. One step from the child of to-day, and the little lithesome figure is changed into a feeble old man or woman, and, as in childhood, depending on others for support. That which we see so fixed and settled on the canvas was but the momentary impress of a passing shadow of beings hurrying away to another world.

All unseen by his unconscious ancestors, Oliver rushed by them, trembling with excitement, and entering his room, was about to bang to the door behind him, when he discovered that he was not alone.

‘What are you doing here, Jasper?’ he said breathlessly.

‘Putting your things ready to dress for dinner, sir.’

‘Oh yes, I see,’ said Oliver; ‘that will do, you can go now.’

Now Jasper was a smart little fellow, and known amongst his fellow-servants as the tiger. A son of a groom, he had been born on the estate, and was well acquainted, partly by hearsay and partly by observation, with most of the events which, for the last few years, had happened in or about the Hall. Sir Edward, after a little training, had handed him over to Oliver, chiefly to take charge of his pony, and accompany him in his daily ride, which had been prescribed for him to take without much reference to wind or weather.

‘Just a minute more, sir,’ said Jasper, ‘and then I will be off like a ghost.’

‘Seen a ghost!’ echoed Oliver. ‘Have you seen one too?’

‘Seen a ghost!’ said Jasper; ‘no, I only meant I’d vanish like one. But that’s all nothing. There’s no such thing as a ghost, though Mrs Brown says there is.’

‘Has she seen one?’ asked Oliver.

‘One!’ replied Jasper contemptuously.

‘Why, according to what I’ve heard, she has seen a dozen at least.’

‘And what were they like?’ asked Oliver, with a shudder.

‘Oh, some were great monsters, with their heads reaching nearly up to the stars, and some such little wee things that she could not make them out without her spectacles. Which waistcoat will you have, the blue or the white one?’

‘Did she say they were white?’ asked Oliver, his mind still full of his late fright.

‘All sorts of colours,’ said Jasper; ‘but then, you see, she’s only an old woman, and doesn’t know any better.’

‘But we read of ghosts in the Bible,’ said Oliver.

‘Yes, so she says, but I told her they had all been blown away since then. She said I was an unbeliever, and she wouldn’t have anything more to say to me. Will you like to go and have a talk with her about them?’

‘No, I don’t want to talk or think about them.’

‘We can hardly see her to-morrow,’ said Jasper. ‘You know you are to go out with Sir Edward and Mr Jesse, and I don’t know who else, for a day’s sport.’

‘Oh, dear,’ said Oliver, turning restlessly in his chair, ‘I do wish they would not make me go out with them. They tire me to death.’

‘And you don’t like the guns?’

‘Like them? I hate them!’ exclaimed Oliver, ‘and never feel safe in the sight of one.’

‘I wish I had your chance, sir,’ said Jasper.

‘If you mean to go trampling about through wet grass and brambles, I wish you had, for I don’t like it at all. There now, you have stopped here and kept me talking, and I wanted to rest.’

‘Did you have a long walk with Lea? You look as if it had been too much for you.’

‘It was not the walk. I wish you had been with me, and then you would have seen—’ he stopped abruptly.

‘Nothing very wonderful along that road, I should think,’ put in Jasper.

Oliver looked hesitatingly at him. He was the only one in the house he felt safe in making free with, and he wanted to tell him about his late fright, but did not know how to begin. It was curious to see how differently their minds were constituted, and yet how well they seemed to understand each other. Jasper, from a child, had heard his young master spoken of as one who was not so easily dealt with as most people. Either that he thought but little, or that he could not find words to express his thoughts. He knew he was very weak, and that anything happening out of the usual way made him very uneasy.

That he was afraid of the ball when in the cricket field, and that he could not, without

much persuasion, be induced to mount any horse higher than his own little pony. That he was a poor shot, and that he would rather any one else should load his gun than he do it himself. That he did not like rowing on the lake, and that nothing short of a positive command from his father would induce him to take off his clothes, and venture to walk in. As for taking a header from the bank, that was quite out of the question.

But the knowledge of all this, and the contempt it might have produced in his young and inexperienced mind, was held in check by Oliver's unvarying kindness to him. Although Oliver could make but little use of the knowledge that had been driven into his brain, he had sufficient sense to see that Jasper was naturally a clever youth, and one capable of strong affection for him.

Hence their free and easy manner with each other, which, but for a little explanation, the reader might deem the result of ignorant impudence on the one side, and undue familiarity on the other. It may appear questionable, but it is no less a fact, that Jasper had more real influence over the mind of Oliver, than his father, brother, and sisters, all together.

Before the dressing was finished, the account of the supposed ghost seen in the churchyard had been confided to Jasper, with strict injunc-

tions that he was not to repeat it to any one, in or out of the house.

Though feeling at his heart's core how really timid he was, and that when the word coward had been applied to him, he had not dared resent it, still he shrank from the idea of letting any one know it, or giving them an opportunity of commenting on his actions.

With nervous, anxious steps, at the sound of the second bell, he passed down by the fixed gaze of the old family portraits, and entered the drawing-room, where he found his father, brother, sisters, and Miss Gordon from the vicarage. His entrance was scarcely noticed by any one, but Miss Gordon, who moved towards him with an outstretched hand. As they stood together, the dinner was announced, when Sir Edward said, 'That is well, Oliver, I see you have chosen your partner, and will take the lady to the dining-room.'

The order, for such it was from his father, was awkwardly obeyed. He felt that the eyes of all present were fixed upon him, and that it would be useless to attempt to hide his confusion. Perhaps his own imagination had more to do with the expression of their eyes than they were aware of themselves. His character was so well known to them all, that they were not curious about his movement, and Miss Gordon took the proffered arm, and led, rather

than was led by her blushing companion into the dining-room.

While the dinner was proceeding, Oliver felt that the eyes of his father were upon him, and although there was no unkind expression in them, he shrank from their gaze, and looked and acted more like a machine than a man possessed of reason.

Fortunately for him the conversation, in consequence of the presence of Miss Gordon, was confined almost entirely to parish matters. She and Miss Harewood were two young recruits, as lady visitors to the sick and poor of the parish.

No sooner were they seen abroad than every cottage door was open to them. There was no curiosity on their parts to know how well the poor were fed. No lifting of saucepan lids on the fire to see how large a piece of pork was boiling. No inquiry about pies or pudding, or sniffing about to discover if there was any liquid present stronger than water, or whether they indulged in the luxury of sugar.

They visited the poor to speak words of comfort to them, and with an open hand when any were sick or afflicted with misfortune. There was no ostentatious display of charity on the one hand, and no pleading of poverty on the other. No sudden ingress of the visitors, and no hasty huddling out of sight things not to be seen by them.

As their proceedings were in accordance with the sentiments of Sir Edward, he spoke encouragingly to them, and greatly commended their work. It was a subject upon which Oliver could venture to put in a few words, and that he did but very sparingly. Jesse and Grace were lively as usual, and not only able to take part in the general conversation, but to have a little extra talk upon indifferent subjects between themselves.

When the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, Sir Edward proceeded to complete the arrangements for the morrow. Mr Gordon and Mr Gill, his curate, had promised to be with them for some part of the day. 'We will not tie them to time, as I mean to make to-morrow a red-letter day, and spend the greater part of it in the open air. You have cleaned your gun?' he observed to Oliver.

'The keeper cleaned it for me,' was the reply.

'I wish,' said his father, 'you would bring it home with you, and look to it yourself, or if you are afraid to do so,' he added, a little bitterly, 'let your youth Jasper do it for you.'

'At what hour shall we start,' asked Jesse.

'Will nine o'clock be too early for you, Oliver?' inquired Sir Edward.

'I will be ready at any time you please, sir.'

'Let us say nine then, and perhaps you, Jesse, will send a note to Mr Gordon to say we shall

be pleased to meet him at that hour, or any other during the day that may be more convenient to him.'

In the drawing-room, before they retired for the night, Jesse took his brother aside, and gently inquired if he was not well.

'I feel a little queer,' replied Oliver; 'but don't talk to me about it.'

Jesse looked inquiringly at him for a second or two, and then said,—

'By-the-bye, you have not told me what had befallen you and Lea in your walk.'

'I had been startled by a sheep or something else,' answered Oliver evasively.

'I wish you could get the better of your disposition to be too easily alarmed,' observed Jesse kindly.

He saw that his brother had been really frightened. He could laugh heartily at some of his foolish fancies, but even that was done rather in kindness than contempt.

Oliver did not reply, but moved away.

'Poor fellow!' thought Jesse. 'I must have it out with you another time.'

The next morning was bright and cool for the season of the year, and in and about the Hall all was life and bustle. Jasper was early in Oliver's room, troubled with no care further than that which arose from his desire to have his master ready a little before the time than

after, that there might be no shouting about the place for him, and making him as unfit to hold a gun in his hand as an elephant a telescope to his eye. Looking admiringly at his master when he was fully equipped for the sport of the day, he said,—

‘There, now—you are quite up to the mark; and if you will just try to look a little bold and brave, you will get on as well as any one.’

‘You think the clothes make the man?’ said Oliver.

‘I know they have a deal to do with it,’ said Jasper. ‘I have seen many a fellow who would not dare to fight with his own shadow looking as brave as a lion when fitted out for work as you are now.’

‘Is it right, do you think,’ asked Oliver, ‘to attempt to disguise one’s feelings — to look brave, as you say, when you don’t feel so?’

‘To be sure it is, sir. What business has any one with any part of us but our outsides? and if we are not quite comfortable within, why should we tell everybody about it? What are our insides to other people, I should like to know?’

‘Of course nothing,’ said Oliver, in a desponding tone, ‘as long as we can keep our feeling under control, which you know I cannot always do.’

‘Try, sir—try!’ cried Jasper. ‘Stand up

like this, and look fierce and bold ;' and taking the gun in his hand, he threw it over his shoulder, muzzle forward, and strutted round the room, with a look of importance and self-sufficiency that brought a smile to the pale face of his master.

' But every one would know that it was not real.'

' Ay ; but if they were not quite sure, sir ?' said Jasper.

' It is of no use what you say,' sighed Oliver. ' I am a coward when there is any rough work to be done ; I know I am, and I cannot disguise it.'

' Oh,' said Jasper, ' you are ever so much better than you were.'

' You are more used to me,' replied Oliver, ' and do not see me as you did at first.'

' At first, sir !' cried Jasper. ' Why, I have seen you ever since I was no higher than that.' And he spread out his hand about two feet from the floor.

' You were too young to understand me then.'

' Hark !' said Jasper ; ' there is Sir Edward gone down to breakfast. Don't forget you are to ask if I may go with you ; and you will see when we get away alone if we don't bring down some game to put in the bag I mean to carry with me ; there will be a mistake somewhere, I rather think.'

With gun in hand, thick boots, and leather leggings, Oliver passed down again by his ancestors, who evidently took a fixed interest in human affairs, as they smiled upon him as they did on the last evening as he hurried by them to his room.

Jasper, feeling pretty certain that something would occur to prevent him from taking part in the sport if he did not bestir himself to remind his master of his promise, had kept back the powder-flask until the gentlemen were all in the breakfast-room ; then going down to Oliver, he presented it to him, as he said,—

‘ Do you wish me to go with you, sir ? ’

‘ The idea of a sportsman going out without his powder ! ’ remarked Sir Edward. Then, addressing Jasper, he said, ‘ Oh yes ; of course he does ; and perhaps he would like you to carry the powder.’

‘ I can carry that myself,’ said Oliver, with a stifled sob, as he took the flask and dropped it into his side pocket.

‘ Let him come,’ said Jesse ; ‘ he can mark down the birds for us.’

‘ I will take him, if my father does not object.’

‘ Let him come, by all means,’ said Sir Edward ; ‘ he may be able to help his master through the brambles.’

Jasper required nothing further ; he was off

in a moment to jump in to the clothes he had put in order ready for the expedition, as soon as the order for going should reach his ear.

The vicar had sent word to say that he and his curate could not be at the Hall before twelve o'clock, when Sir Edward decided that they would first run round the outlying districts, and go to the keeper's house to meet their friends, and commence their real work with a good luncheon, which he ordered to be provided there.

At nine o'clock the head keeper with his assistants were in attendance, with guns and dogs ready for action.

Sir Edward, without seeming to pay any special attention to Philip Lea, was a close observer of his bearing. Only a few words passed between them, and those merely on the business in hand.

A slight fog had ushered in one of October's finest days. Then the sun came out brilliantly, and a gentle refreshing breeze swept over the landscape, making the hedgerows and trees through which it passed musical with its touch. Flocks of birds, chattering rather than singing, were busy with their harvest work in the unploughed stubble or the freshly upturned earth —one for the scattered seed, another for worms, slugs, and insects, guided by the unfailing spirit of natural instinct.

Autumn was still in his youthful days, and had done little more than give notice of his presence. A few scattered leaves floated through the air, but the eye was rather charmed than distressed by the various hues the trees had assumed, as the leaves danced and glittered in heaven's bright light.

The attendants' bags did not rapidly fill before the hour of luncheon. Jasper not being reminded that his duties lay in the distance, to mark down the birds, kept close to his master all the morning, but unfortunately the ground was too open for him to get much sport. Once or twice, urged by his 'Now, now!' Oliver made a random shot, but the only answer the desired victim gave him was in a few scattered feathers as it flew away unharmed.

Once, for a minute, a chance was presented to Jasper, which he eagerly seized upon. They were in a field at the corner of a wood. The others had turned the corner, and were out of sight, when a rabbit left its hole and made for the hedge.

'Look, look!' cried Jasper.

'Where?' said Oliver. 'I can see nothing.'

With an impulse not to be resisted, Jasper snatched the gun from his master's hand, saying, 'You stop here,' and was in the act of forcing his way through the hedge to meet the rabbit on the other side, when bang went

the gun, which he was holding horizontally by the barrel, tearing its way backward through his hand, to his unbounded surprise and annoyance.

Oliver sprang some distance from the ground, and called out, with chattering teeth,—  
‘Have you hit it?’

‘No,’ said Jasper, looking at his hand with a rueful face, on which the sight of the gun had left a long red streak. ‘I am only glad I didn’t hit you,’ he thought, as he picked up the gun, and then took out his handkerchief to wipe the blood from his hand.

‘How did you do that?’ asked Oliver.

‘Only a scratch,’ said Jasper. ‘But come along, or we shall have some one back to see what we’ve got.’

‘You were in too great a hurry,’ remarked Oliver.

A few steps brought them up to Smith, who said,—

‘Did you kill, sir?’

‘No; but it was only a rabbit,’ was the reply.

‘Only a rabbit!’ repeated Sir Edward. ‘You should have hit it had it been only a mouse. The prize is for the correct eye and steady hand, and not for the mere value of the game.’

‘Papa wants to make us crack shots,’ said Jesse; ‘but he knows there are few things

more difficult to do than to hit a rabbit when it has but a few inches to run from one hole to another.'

'Papa wants you both,' observed Sir Edward, 'to grow up strong men, vigorous in mind and body.'





## CHAPTER VIII.

**A**T twelve o'clock the vicar and his curate joined the party, and within a few minutes from that time the lawn in front of the keeper's house, where the table had been spread, was echoing to the sounds of cheerful voices, and the noisy clatter of knives and forks on plates and dishes.

There was no want of attendance. The servants from the hall were there, acting with their usual care and propriety. To them the scene only was changed, their duties remaining the same. At a little distance from the principal table another had been provided for the keeper and his assistants, that no time might be lost in waiting the one for the other.

Sir Edward had called it one of his red-letter days, and as such he desired to make it to all around him. He merely gave a general caution that, as they were looking forward for plenty of

sport, they must remember it was necessary they should go with steady hands and clear eyes to their work.

When the business of the day recommenced, although they had been joined by their two friends, they did not long maintain the increase in their number. They had barely gone a quarter of a mile, after leaving the luncheon table, when Jesse met with a mishap, that made a prisoner of him for the remainder of the day. He was walking by the side of the curate, when he stepped upon a loose stone and fell on his knees.

It was at first feared that he had broken his leg, but on an examination being made by the vicar, who had a slight knowledge of surgery, the bone was pronounced to be uninjured, but the ankle severely sprained. Wincing under the pain, Jesse said to his father, 'Pray, do not trouble about me. If some one will lend me a hand to get back to Mrs Smith, I shall do very well.'

Had Sir Edward been alone with his sons, he would doubtless at once have put an end to their sport. After a slight pause, however, it was continued. Painful as Jesse's injury might prove, it was not likely to be attended by any dangerous symptoms, and on his being helped back to the house, and placed in an arm-chair, with his injured foot resting on a stool, he declared that there was little the matter with him,

and he would not have any one stop with him a moment longer. As soon as he found himself alone, although his fortitude did not desert him, he could not disguise from the inmates of the house that he was in great pain.

The elder children were gone to school, and the youngest upstairs on the bed taking his midday nap, so that Mrs Smith and Miss Montag had nothing to take off their attention from their suffering guest, besides looking out at the servants as they were removing the remains of the feast from the lawn.

'I am afraid you are in great pain,' said Mrs Smith.

'It would be foolish to say I am not,' replied Jesse; 'but I suppose I must bear it patiently, as our good vicar would say.'

'Perhaps if he felt it himself,' said Mrs Smith, 'the word patience would not have come so handy to him. Don't you think, sir, if you had some hot water, and bathed your ankle, it would be easier?'

Without waiting for an answer, Miss Montag, who had been standing near, instantly poured out some hot water into a basin, and placed it by his side.

'You are very kind,' said Jesse, 'but I am afraid I must trouble you to help me. I appear to have fallen into a state of helpless childhood all at once.'

Mrs Smith was quite equal to the occasion. With a gentle hand she drew off his sock, and was soon busy bathing the ankle with the water, which Lizzie constantly renewed, so that it might be kept very warm. It will be remembered that Jesse was not a stranger in the keeper's house. From a child he and the inmates had been on very friendly terms, and since his breakdown from over study, he had spent much of his time with Smith, and not unfrequently in his house.

His temperament did not lead him to seek the company of ladies. He was polite to them, and easy and civil to females in a lower station, but for any further care about them he had no inclination. The idea of becoming a great African traveller, and emulating the deeds of Livingstone, Stanley, and others, had filled his heart and brain to the exclusion of all tender, and, as he was wont to say, nonsensical emotions. Now a change, little understood by himself, was taking place in the secret recesses of his soul.

His father's desire that he should go to Oxford and distinguish himself there, came back to his mind unasked and undesired. 'If you go to Africa,' a spirit seemed to whisper to him, 'you may never come back again to meet your friends; but if you go to Oxford you can be to and fro so frequently, that you will be, as it were, always with them.' This spirit-whisper

might be a mere fancy of a weakened brain, or it might arise from some inward emotion to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

As the bathing went on the pain abated, and Jesse grew talkative.

‘ You have a very pleasant look-out here,’ he said ; ‘ but I should think you must at times find your house very dull and lonely.’

‘ You would not say so, sir, if the children were at home,’ said Mrs Smith.

‘ But they are generally at school,’ observed Jesse.

‘ For a good part of the day to be sure they are,’ replied Mrs Smith, ‘ but though they take their noisy tongues with them, they leave a large account of themselves behind.’

‘ In what manner, may I ask ?’

‘ In everything they have to do with,’ was the reply. ‘ Beside the work they make upstairs, there are the breakfast things to clear away in the morning, and their dinner to be prepared for the middle of the day. Tea for the evening, and washing before bedtime. And then who but one with a family knows how many dirty clothes are to be washed and mended. Depend upon it, sir, a woman with a young family, if she does her duty, is never very lonely anywhere.’

‘ And does it affect Miss Montag in the same way ?’

‘I can’t say it does,’ replied Mrs Smith, ‘but she is here, and can answer for herself.’

‘I do not think we are ever very lonely,’ replied Lizzie.

‘A little sometimes, eh?’ said Jesse. Then he added, ‘There, that will do, I think you have almost worked a cure, and now if you will help me, I will have my sock on again, and try if I can stand.’

‘Better keep just where you are, sir,’ said Mrs Smith, ‘till the carriage comes for you.’

Jesse reluctantly complied with her advice. He was in less pain, and he was growing weary of his present position. He wished to be up and moving about. It might be that he was uneasy on account of the firing he heard in the distance, and was not able to join in the sport. ‘By-the-bye,’ he said, after some minutes’ silence, ‘how does your husband like his new assistant?’

‘Pretty well, I think,’ replied Mrs Smith.

‘Only pretty well!’ repeated Jesse.

‘Well, you see, sir, my husband is a straightforward, plain-dealing man, and speaks his mind very freely when he sees anyone not so particular about his work as he might be.’

‘And that is not pleasant to the person spoken to?’ said Jesse inquiringly.

‘But you see, sir, Philip Lea has only taken

to this sort of work very lately, and perhaps he has rather a trying time of it with some of the others.'

'On account of his work in London, I suppose?' said Jesse.

'Yes, but not altogether that; I think, sir, 'tis his manner.'

'Talks too much of what he has seen?' suggested Jesse.

'No, he doesn't talk much; but he moves about as if he was master over all the others. But there, he is very civil to me, and I don't want to say anything against him; but I can't help thinking he is not quite right in his head, because if he knows so much as he seems to think he does, why didn't he know a rogue from an honest man when he was in London?'

'I suppose to the eye they are much alike,' said Jesse.

'Well, sir, I must say I wish—no, I won't say that; only, I am sorry he ever came so near us.'

While this conversation was taking place, Miss Montag was superintending the maid-servant in her work in the kitchen. When Mrs Smith, feeling that she was talking a little more freely than her husband would approve of if he knew it, adroitly brought it to a close by saying that she must go upstairs, as she thought her boy was awake.

‘Before you go,’ said Jesse, ‘I wish you would help me to get out to the bench in front of the house. It is quite warm, and the air will be pleasant.’

‘Better stop where you are,’ reiterated Mrs Smith; seeing, however, that he was making an attempt without her assistance, she prepared to help him.

‘Oh dear!’ cried Jesse; ‘what a fool I am to make such a fuss about a mere sprain.’

The so-called bench was rather a long garden-chair, which had been made by one of the under keepers out of the roots and stripped limbs of some oak trees that had flourished near the spot. Safely accomplishing his little journey from the chair within to the bench or chair without, Jesse leaned back upon a pillow Miss Montag had brought out, and tried to appear quite at his ease.

‘Now, if I had a newspaper,’ he said, ‘I could be quite jolly.’

‘Well, how funny!’ said Mrs Smith; ‘here is one that has just come from Newport.’

‘Capital!’ said Jesse; ‘that will do.’ But he soon found that he could not freely handle it. The movement of his arms communicated itself to the injured foot, and gave him, as Mrs Smith thought, unnecessary pain.

‘There now,’ she said; ‘you just sit quite still, and let Lizzie read the paper to you.’

‘If she will be good enough to do so I shall be greatly obliged,’ rejoined Jesse, ‘as I find the slightest movement gives me, coward that I am to say so, great pain.’

Lizzie, in her usual quiet, undemonstrative way, placed a chair by his side, and taking the paper from his hand, sat down to read, while Mrs Smith hurried away, alarmed by certain sounds of a movement above, which she had good reason to fear might end in a little body tumbling unceremoniously down the stairs.

‘I want to hear something,’ said Jesse, ‘that will take my attention off from this troublesome ankle of mine. A murder, shipwreck, earthquake, a Fenian conspiracy, or anything else that will rouse a fellow up and keep his thoughts from dwelling on his own misfortune.’

‘I am glad to say I do not see anything about murder,’ replied Lizzie; ‘but here is something of a man who leaped off from a suspension bridge, intending to go into the clear, flowing river, instead of which he went into the mud, and was dragged out again little the worse for his jump, excepting the damage done to his clothes.’

‘Poor fool,’ said Jesse, ‘to spoil his clothes in that way. Anything more about him?’

‘No; but here is a long account of the necessity of dockising the river.’

‘Oh, that is an old story,’ said Jesse; ‘please pass it over.’

‘Then,’ said Lizzie, ‘there is a column about the rival docks.’

‘Yes; I have heard of them too, and the ill-natured things the rivals have said of each other to amuse the country at large. Please pass them over also, till they can meet like neighbours, and settle their differences in a friendly way.’

‘Here is something about the meeting of the members of the Beaufort hunt.’

‘Ah!’ said Jesse, ‘that is a little more to the purpose. The Duke of Beaufort is an English nobleman one likes to think and talk about. A real lover of country sports, to whom the cry of the hounds is pure, unalloyed music.’

From that the reading went on to other subjects, to the great satisfaction of Jesse, who was not altogether pleased when Mrs Smith returned with her baby boy. Nor was the little fellow pleased with the reception he met with. He could not understand why the gentleman did not jump up and have his usual bit of fun with him.

‘Mr Jesse has hurt his foot,’ said his mother.

‘Georgie, get up and sit with him then.’

‘No, you must stop with me and be quiet.’

Jesse, who had of late taken great notice of the child, did not appear to have any desire for his company now. It might be that he was afraid he would roll over on his ankle, but so

or not, Mrs Smith took effectual means to save him from being annoyed by calling to the maid to bring her some crumbs of bread that the child might scatter to the birds that were hopping about on the grass at a little distance from them.

An hour earlier than they were expected the sportsmen returned. Sir Edward had not been able to disguise his anxiety about Jesse, which Mr Gordon perceiving, proposed, after they had spent two or three hours in the preserves, to finish for the day by working their way homeward. This they accordingly did, and came in sight of the keeper's house, where the little group before it presented the materials for a picture that would have required a skilful hand to transfer to canvas.

In the background were the majestic elms, covered with their autumn tinted leaves. Then the house, in its clothing of the rose, clematis, and jasmine, with here and there a blossom peeping out between the shining leaves. Next the rustic garden-chair on which Jesse reclined, having at his back a cushion, and for his head to rest upon a snow-white pillow, while a crimson knitted shawl covered his legs and feet.

By his side sat Miss Montag, the newspaper having just fallen from her hand as she was answering an interesting question that had arisen from her reading. Mrs Smith, standing

near them, looking admiringly on her child as he was toddling forward, with his hands full of crumbs thrust out before him ready to scatter to the birds which were approaching rather than retiring from him. The maid who had brought out the crumbs, turning, as she was about to re-enter the house, to have one more look at the dear little angel,—the title she had bestowed upon the child.

What would have been the feeling of the sportsmen had they come suddenly upon the scene at a few yards' distance, may be doubtful. There might have been seen on the face of more than one of them an expression of dissatisfaction. They were, however, at too great a distance to take in more than a general view of the group. By the time of their near approach, the condition of things had changed. The elder children had returned from school, and the careful mother having taken up the little one in her arms, had returned with them to the house, followed almost immediately by the newspaper reader.

‘Well, Jesse, my boy,’ said Sir Edward, ‘how is it with you by this time? Glad to see you out in the bracing air.’

‘A little cranky still, you see,’ replied Jesse; ‘but Mrs Smith has proved a capital nurse, and I shall soon be all right again. Have you had good sport?’

'Nothing to complain of,' said Sir Edward; 'but I want Mr Gordon to have another look at your ankle.'

The look was taken, and the system Mrs Smith had adopted having been approved, a favourable opinion was, without hesitation, pronounced by the vicar.

'Well,' said Jesse to his brother, 'and how many brace of pheasants have fallen to your gun, Oliver?'

'Two,' replied Oliver, with a slight cough.

'Glad to hear it,' said Jesse; 'an improvement on your last day's work.'

'We have been a little steadier to-day than usual,' said Sir Edward, glancing at Oliver.

'And I have had some good shots,' thought Jasper.

'I ordered the carriage to meet us at four o'clock,' remarked Sir Edward, 'and I see we are nearly an hour before our time. Will some one run and tell the coachman to come here directly. You must not attempt to walk, Jesse.' As he spoke he looked at Philip Lea; but the youth did not appear to think he was spoken to, and Jasper gave him no time to make the discovery, as he ran off, saying, as he went, 'I will have the carriage here in a few minutes, Sir Edward.'

While the gentlemen were talking together, Philip Lea whispered something into the ear

of Smith, and then made for the side door of the house. The day had passed in anything but a pleasant way with him. There was always something to remind him of his dependent position. He had been reasoning with himself the whole day in a very unreasonable manner.

‘Had I broken both my legs,’ he thought, ‘there would not have been the same fuss about me as there is with Jesse for a mere sprained ankle. Of course there would not. And why? Am I not as good as he is? And what makes a man worthy of notice but his own ability.

‘Should I be different to what I am if I had come into the world as the son of a duke? I am as much a gentleman as any of them, and why should I not be treated as one? Then there is that whipper-snapper Jasper putting himself forward at every turn and on a level with me, with his chattering tongue and stupid jests.

‘Sir Edward, too, why should he be always watching me with a suspicious eye? If his son Jesse had met with the misfortune I did in London, would he have been looked upon as something little short of a criminal? Not he. He would have been pitied. And why? Because he deserved it more than I did? No; but simply because he happened to be the son

of a baronet, while I am— Well, no matter. I will be up with them some day, sooner or later, or my name is not Philip. Why, there has not been one of the common markers out to-day, considering my education, but has been treated with more respect than I have met with. What have I had to do? Keep with Smith and the gentlemen? No; but to be ordered here and there as a mere scout to them.'

Such and such like thoughts had been running riot through his brain during the day, filling him with a desperate resolve that, if the same kind of treatment was continued only a day or two longer, he would once more try his fortune at a distance from Woodfield, and never more come back again until he could, with money in his pocket, look the best of them in the face, and say, 'I am as good as you.'

On their return he was the first to perceive the group in front of the house, and what from the distance he could not clearly see, his fancy brought before him in the brightest colours. Jesse was being nursed and waited on by Miss Montag as no one had ever been before. It was a shame. Mrs Smith might do it if she chose; but Miss Montag had no business to be hanging about over him. 'Ah! I see it now,' he muttered; 'that is the reason she treats me

so coolly. Of course it is. He may say or do what he pleases ; I must stand off until he has had his say. Will I ?' That remains to be seen.

On entering his portion of the house, he could scarcely restrain himself from an outburst of temper before he closed the door. Thus far the evil spirit within him had only made its presence known by his sullen looks and wicked thoughts. But now, when he found himself alone, all restraint was cast off, and he threw himself on his bed, writhing in an agony of vexation and disappointment.

Jasper having returned with the carriage, Jesse was carefully placed in it and driven gently to the hall ; and the keeper's house, after the events of the day, resumed its ordinary character.

Philip remained in his room till one of the children was sent to tell him tea was ready. He only used his part of the house as a bedroom. When Sir Edward proposed that he should take the sick man's place, it was on the understanding that his meals should be provided for him under the superintendence of Mrs Smith, which ended in his being, during the day, received into the house as one of the family.

For a week after commencing his duties all went pleasantly enough ; but a change soon

came over the state of affairs. Philip's high opinion of himself had only been scotched, not killed. No sooner was his London trouble over than his old self reappeared, much at first to the amusement of his fellow under keepers, who laughed at his pretension to superior knowledge of the instincts and habits of the denizen of the woods and fields.

They were not called upon for anything out of the common way in the performance of their duty. Day and night it was a very simple affair with them, and, perchance, they as much underrated science as Philip was ignorantly fond of boasting of it. Smith soon found it necessary to avoid disputing with him, and only to speak on business when he had an order to give or reproof to administer respecting some unperformed duty on his part, or his taking upon himself to define the duty of others.

His determination was taken to quit the place as soon as he discovered the estimation in which he was held by those around him, but there were two or three things that were likely to interfere with his immediate departure. In his short experience of London life, he had learnt that to go there without money would not at all answer his purpose.

'It will be rather a derogatory act,' he thought; 'but I must get some money from my

father or grandfather. Gold is gold, whether in the hands of a lord or his serving man. It is not my business to inquire through what hands it passes, until it drops into mine. If my noble progenitors will let me have a trifle, it will be some little recompense for their having brought me into the world in the grovelling position in which I find myself.'

While this matter was being agitated in his mind, another hindrance insiduously placed itself in his way. He felt his dislike to a country life become less urgent than it had been. The keeper's house was very pleasantly situated, and in time he would of course be head keeper, and then he could go on looking upward with a wife already chosen until he would get the whole management of the estate in his own hands.

At this point he had arrived a week previous to the day of the shooting party, and only wanted a favourable opportunity of speaking to a certain person, to know if she would prefer settling down here with him for life, or go with him as his wife to London, and try their fortunes there.

Immediately after the departure of Sir Edward and his friends, Miss Montag left the house in answer to an invitation she had received to take tea at a neighbouring farm-house, so that when Philip followed the boy, he found

her chair vacant. After his outburst of passion had spent itself in vain complaints, he resolved that he would speak to Miss Montag in the course of the evening, and learn how far she was disposed to enter into his feelings in the object he had in view.

He was a little disconcerted when he saw her empty chair, and more so as the business of the meal progressed, and she did not make her appearance. After a time he discovered the cause of her absence from one of the children, without appearing very much interested in the matter, and then asked Smith if he had any business in hand for the evening.

'I think we must be on the alert to-night,' was the reply. 'I believe there are two or three strangers in the neighbourhood, and if they get a notion that we have had a hard day's work, they may calculate on our feeling sleepy, and leave the preserves to take care of themselves. I have told the others to be here at ten o'clock, when we will settle what is to be done.'

'I will be with you at that time,' said Philip, as he took his hat and left the room.

The house to which Miss Montag had been invited was but at a little distance, and, although to a stranger, the road from one house to the other might seem frightfully lonely to the inhabitants of the place, everything about it had

long been so familiar to them, that the rocks and trees by its side which would have caused a shiver to another as he passed, were looked upon as pleasant homely objects.

In and about that road Philip spent two long weary hours. He did not wish to be seen by any one besides the person he there hoped to meet, and therefore managed to place himself where he could see without being seen. After much impatient waiting, he heard footsteps approaching, and then recognised the voice of the lady he wished to meet. Miss Montag was returning home, accompanied by two young friends from the house where she had spent the evening.

He heard one of her companions say,—

‘ You have but a very little distance now to go, so I think we will leave you here and run home again.’

‘ I am sorry you have come so far,’ replied Lizzie, as they shook hands, and with a friendly good-night parted.

As soon as she was fairly alone, Philip, as if by accident, met her.

‘ Is that you, Miss Montag?’ he said; ‘ I heard where you were gone out to tea, and as I had nothing in particular to do, I thought I would come and meet you; but you see I have not got very far from home.’

‘ I am very glad you have not,’ thought Lizzie;

but she merely said, 'Thank you ; I have had company so far, and now I will do as they have done, run home as fast as I can.'

'Why are you in such a hurry?' asked Philip, as he placed himself before her to stop her progress.

'It is getting late,' replied Lizzie, 'and I may be wanted with the children.'

'They went to bed long ago,' said Philip. 'I saw the light put out in their room.'

'Then you have not just come from the house?'

'No,' replied Philip, 'I have been out here for two hours for the purpose of speaking to you alone.'

'Then you have been rather unlucky,' said a voice almost in his ear.

Philip, startled at being thus suddenly accosted, turned angrily to the speaker, when Lizzie, finding the road clear, made off with her utmost speed.

'What in the devil's name are you doing here, Dixon?' cried Philip, in a towering rage.

'Nothing just at present,' was the reply.

'You were ordered for ten o'clock,' said Philip, 'and it is not yet nine.'

'Nearly nine and a half, or I am mistaken,' said Dixon ; 'and, besides that, maybe I am on a like game as yourself.'

‘Why did you interfere with me, then, with your cursed gabble?’ cried Philip.

‘Why,’ replied Dixon, ‘didn’t I hear you say you waited to see the lady alone, and you wouldn’t have me stand by and hear your love-making, would you?’

‘Who told you what my talking would be about? Get out of the way, fool, or I will knock you down.’

‘Will you, though?’ said Dixon; ‘you seem to forget that two can play at that game; but I don’t want to remind you of it, only just so far as to advise you to keep a civil tongue in your head, and give up trying to put off your swagger upon your fellows here, because, you see, they will not have it, Master Philip.’

‘Let me pass, I say,’ cried Philip.

‘Why don’t you knock me down?’ retorted Dixon.

‘I don’t want to quarrel with a fool,’ said Philip.

‘Then let the wise man and the fool jog on together,’ said Dixon. ‘Only let us be just civil to each other, to prevent mistakes, or the wise man or the fool, or both of them mayhap, will find themselves in the ditch.’

Philip clutched his gun tightly in both his hands; but he did not strike. Sounds of voices

floated on the air, which told him that two or more of the under keepers were very near, if they had not been present, the whole time he had been there with Dixon.

To the music of horse-laughter from his tormentors, he, with a muttered curse, rushed away towards the house.





## CHAPTER IX.

**C**HEN Sir Edward Harewood, then plain Edward, was summoned to Dover, some twenty years since, he found his uncle, Sir Henry, in charge of an old servant who had lived with him for many years, and who, it seemed, had obtained considerable influence over him. As days passed on, and the sick man's end drew near, he commended his servant very strongly to his nephew, remarking that, although he had not forgotten him in his will, it was his wish that his services should be continued in the family. 'My son was greatly attached to him,' he added, 'and I think you will be, when I am gone.'

The wish was readily complied with, and the old servant would have felt his change of masters very little, had it not been for his increasing age, which, on Sir Edward's disappointment and determination to travel, rendered him unfit

to accompany him. With a gentleman like the late baronet, who was the elder of the two, crossing rivers or seas, or climbing mountains, was all very well. Every assistance that money could command was always present to make the journey less toilsome ; nothing, at the same time, being done without the most cool and deliberate consideration.

With Sir Edward everything might be supposed to run in another groove. Journeys would be undertaken at a minute's notice, with little thought of the difficulties to be met with by the way, and no preparation made to encounter them. The raging course of the flooded river or the tempest-tossed waves of the sea would not hold him in check. In his present mood he would go on board any vessel, when the most venturesome captain would hesitate about leaving the harbour.

As for climbing mountains, he would be ready to take the most dangerous tracks, and, perchance, at times even without a guide. Thinking of that, the old servant was fain to confess that his limbs were far too stiff to follow such a leader.

It fortunately happened, however, that he had a son who could relieve him of his office, and who, with Sir Edward's consent, very

readily did so. When they left home, the old man, with a housekeeper and some under servants, remained in charge of the Hall. On Sir Edward's return with his young wife, the old servant found himself sufficiently strong to undertake the duties of butler, or, as he was pleased to call it, house-steward,—his son retaining his position of personal attendant on his master.

About two years after the return from the Continent, an incident occurred in the park which, for a while, created a great sensation by the employment it gave to the restless tongue of gossip. At the close of an autumnal day, when the falling shades of evening were rendering everything at a few yards' distance shapeless or distorted, a weary, way-worn young woman, with two children, crept in unobserved through the park-gate. The children, a boy and a girl, little more than infants, were, like herself, very ill clad. She carried the girl in her arms; while the boy, holding on by her dress, was dragging his feet along on the ground as if each step must be its last.

As they approached the house they were met by Lea, Sir Edward's personal attendant. At another time he might have accosted the woman rudely, and demanded why, at that unseason-

able hour, she was in the park ; but now he was returning from a visit to his motherless son Philip, and he was moved with compassion as he looked upon the sad state of the poor woman and her children.

Instead of replying to his inquiry, if she knew there was no public path through the park, she let the child slip from her arms, and before he could stretch out his hand to save her, fell herself to the ground. He hesitated for a moment what to do, when, feeling his own helplessness to render assistance, he hurried off to the Hall, with the groans of the mother and the wailing of the children ringing in his ears.

The needed assistance was quickly at hand ; but it came too late to be of any service to the poor woman. The fainting fit from which she was at first thought to be suffering was pronounced by the doctor shortly afterwards to be the last fit she could ever have on earth. Tidings of the sad affair were not long in reaching Sir Edward and his lady, and arousing their Christian sympathy.

The body of the poor woman was placed in an empty coachhouse until the necessary inquest could be held upon it ; while the children, at the request of Lady Harewood, were carried into the housekeeper's room, to be taken care

of until some further arrangement could be made for their nursing.

‘It may not appear a very Christian speech,’ observed Sir Edward, who had gone with his wife to see the children, ‘but I must say that I think it would save much excitement and trouble if they were at once taken to the union.’

‘Poor little dears,’ said the lady, ‘not to-night. If one of the servants will take charge of them until the morning, I shall feel greatly obliged.’

‘I will see to that, my lady,’ said the house-keeper.

‘Well, as you please,’ said Sir Edward; ‘still, I think, when a disagreeable duty is to be performed, it is better to have it out of hand as quickly as possible. The poor things must go to the union sooner or later, unless some one comes forward to claim them.’

‘We don’t know who they are, Sir Edward,’ observed the housekeeper; ‘they may have friends at no great distance.’

‘You will see they are properly cared for to-night,’ said Lady Harewood; ‘to-morrow may bring us the knowledge of who they are and where they came from.’

When the morrow came it proved as ignor-

ant as the previous evening. Nothing about the body rendered the slightest assistance. A few pence only were found in a pocket; but no letter or mark on the clothes which might lead to her identification, and the children were too young to show more of their history than by their sobbing and crying, might lead one to suppose that they had lost their mother or some one very nearly related to them.

Every one about the place who chose was permitted to view the body. Amongst those who took advantage of the offer was the old steward. He came, accompanied by his son, and whether it arose from his age or a very tender heart, when he had taken one look at the worn face of the corpse, he turned away and left the place.

The grave soon swallowed up its victim, but the children were saved from the union by the exertions of Lady Harewood, assisted by the old steward.

‘I do not see why you should be so earnest about them; but I cannot act in opposition to such a powerful advocate,’ observed Sir Edward.

After careful inquiry had been made to find them suitable homes, the girl was committed to the care of the wife of the then head keeper and

the boy to that of an old nurse, near the parish church, Lady Harewood holding herself responsible for all necessary expenses ; and there, at the keeper's house, in the person of Lizzie Montag, we have seen the orphan girl so strangely brought upon the scene, and withal so happily provided for. It was a Monday when the children were found, and as their real names could not be ascertained, they were named Edmund and Lizzie Montag by the request of Lady Harewood.

It was some time after the accident to his ankle before Jesse was fairly on his legs again. In the interval the days had dragged wearily on, and his enforced quiet tried his patience severely. 'I am well,' he would exclaim ; 'perfectly well, but this abominable ankle ties me to my chair or a seat in the carriage as securely as the handcuffs of a prisoner tie his hands together. But for that, I feel I could walk, run, jump, or ride as well as ever.'

Complaints, however, availed nothing. Time and rest alone could help him, and which at length they did to his great satisfaction. Then he had a question he wished to put to Smith about his gun. He would not send for him to come to the Hall, as it might interfere with some business he had in hand. No, he would

go down to his house, and take his chance of seeing him; and to the house he went, and saw not only Smith, but one who had been much in his thoughts during his confinement at home.

That his meeting with Miss Montag was something more than friendly, impressed itself on the mind of Mrs Smith through her observant eyes and ears, and she began to reason with herself as to what it might portend. She looked upon Lizzie as one placed under her motherly care, and that she would be answerable in a great measure for any wrong that might happen to her. And might there not be some fear that she would look with too gentle an eye upon Master Jesse, and, without being aware of it, involve herself in difficulties which she would not dream of until they had enveloped her in their folds.

‘When love finds a place in her heart it must be for a worthy object; and why,’ thought careful Mrs Smith, ‘may not her love on such terms be fixed on Mr Jesse Harewood? Was he not young, handsome, and worthy of her love? Yes,’ thought Mrs Smith; ‘but then would she hold any correspondence with him unless marriage was in view? And how could he, the son of a baronet, marry a girl like her? What would his

father say to such an union? Why, he would stop it if he could; and if he could not, he would be angry with them for ever.'

'Suppose I talk to Smith about it. No; I must not do that. He says he can't keep a secret, and so I will trust him with none of mine. But I will just do this, for I know Philip is in love with her; I will be as civil as I can to him, and try to make Lizzie look kindly upon him.' The good lady was taking a heavy burden upon her shoulders, but she was strong, and, as she thought, able to bear it.

And so it happened that while the young people were indulging the fancies natural to their age and inexperience, Mrs Smith was, in as far as she was able, endeavouring to control their destinies by throwing every opposing incident she could in the way of the gentleman she liked, and on the other hand favouring the one she disliked.

At the Hall events were pursuing the even tenor of their way. Sir Edward was fully occupied with his voluntary duties during the day. In the evening he continued his practice of having Oliver alone with him for an hour or two in the library, a task which, though perseveringly persisted in, it must be confessed, became day by day more wearisome. The

truth was making itself but too apparent. The brain of Oliver was not equal to the work he had put upon it.

It was a painful thought that his first-born child—the heir to the family honours—and upon whom he had expended so much care and money, should be so little benefited by all that had been done for him. Still he was not in absolute despair for the character of his house. Jesse, his second son, he felt assured, would be able to hold his own in whatever state fortune might place him, and do honour to the family name.

Very different in tone and manner was the conversation he held with each of them. In the one it was to arouse his dormant faculties, and in the other to moderate and control them. Since Jesse's recovery from the serious effects of his sprained ankle, he had become more than ever devoted to his gun and the sport it afforded him. The greater part of the day he spent in the open air, and he was rapidly recovering from the shock to his system, brought on by his over exertion in his study of medicine.

Sir Edward was pleased to observe that, as Jesse's health was restored, his conversation about the state of Africa grew less pointed, and had but a slight reference to his own personal

feelings or desire to go forth, as he had been wont to say, to conquer difficulties in the cause of civilisation. Wishing to learn if any real change had taken place in the mind of his son on the subject, he asked him one evening, in an apparently casual manner when they were sitting together, if he had any idea when he would be able to resume his study of medicine.

‘My first attempt with them,’ replied Jesse, ‘so completely knocked me over, that I believe I am growing a little shy of making a second. But I suppose I must soon get into harness again, and have another tug to get up the hill.’

‘You started before a little too eagerly,’ said his father. ‘When you recommence you must remember you have a hill before you, and which you will not be able to mount by a single spring.’

‘I confess I feel a little shy of it altogether,’ said Jesse.

‘But you must not go out until you have somewhat made yourself acquainted with the science. That, you know, is a settled thing between us.’

‘Quite so,’ said Jesse; ‘and will you hold me to my agreement?’

‘I should say decidedly so,’ replied Sir

Edward,' if I did not feel you were too much in earnest to wish to escape from it.'

'I seem to be at a standstill, as we used to say at school when we had two courses open to us, and did not know which to take.'

'Will a word from me help you to decide?'

'It will more than help me,' said Jesse.

'Then I would advise you to fall back upon my old plan, and prepare yourself for two or three years at Oxford before you finally decide on the occupation of your life.'

'I think I cannot do better than accept your advice,' said Jesse, 'and leave the African business for the present to cooler and older heads than mine.'

'You have healed a sore place in my heart, Jesse,' rejoined the gratified father, 'for I should have parted with you on your African mission with unspeakable pain.'

'You do not wish, I am sure,' said Jesse, 'to make me self-conceited; still, such kind expressions on your part have, I am afraid, a leading in that direction.'

'I should have felt quite alone without you,' said Sir Edward, with a sigh.

'But you would not have been alone,' rejoined Jesse, 'you would still have had Oliver with you.'

'True, I should have had Oliver, poor fellow,'

was the reply; 'but how could he supply your place with his irresolution on the commonest incidents of life?'

'I am afraid you are a little too despairing about Oliver,' observed Jesse.

'I have endeavoured to be hopeful,' replied his father, 'and laboured in accordance with my hope, but it appears to have been all to no purpose, and I am afraid I must now be resigned to have him looked upon as little better than an idiot.'

'I should like to see the man who would speak of him as one,' said Jesse, all ablaze with indignation.

'But if he spoke truly,' said Sir Edward, 'I do not see how you could fairly quarrel with him.'

'But he would not speak truly,' rejoined Jesse, 'and I trust you will not be displeased when I say I cannot quite agree with you respecting Oliver. I do think you are sometimes a little hard upon him. Of course, you must know much better than I do how he should be treated. But I have observed that he appears, from some cause or other, to lose all confidence in himself when you speak to him. I have seen him tremble at the sound of your voice, when I knew your harshest thought of him was full of kindness.'

‘I have been very desirous,’ replied Sir Edward, ‘that he should worthily occupy his natural position in the world. If my mind has been too strongly influenced by my desire, and you can convince me of the fact, I shall hold myself very blameworthy in many things that I have done in connection with his education.’

‘Pray,’ said Jesse, ‘do not think that I have any desire to charge you with wrong-doing. I only want you to know that I am afraid there has been a mutual misunderstanding with each other. That you have perhaps expected more from Oliver than nature has given him the power of displaying, while he, not understanding the reasons of your words and actions, has felt them bear harshly upon him. You will pardon me, I trust, for speaking thus plainly: I had no intention of doing so when our conversation began.

‘I have nothing to pardon,’ said Sir Edward in, for him, a strangely desponding tone. ‘You have done well to direct my attention to the point of view from which you see your brother. God knows how unceasingly I have watched over him, and endeavoured to gain his confidence, and to strengthen his mind. If I have acted too much on my own conviction of the method to be pursued without a due regard for

his natural abilities, there may be still time for me to adopt with advantage another course.

‘I am afraid you are treating the matter too seriously,’ said Jesse.

‘That I cannot do,’ rejoined Sir Edward, ‘with the view I take of it. But we will not argue it further at present.’

That evening a more than usually genial spirit seemed to have possession of the drawing-room, and to exert its power to produce a smile on every face. As was now often the case, the vicar and his daughter were present, in addition to all the members of the family. Sir Edward, beginning to take a more hopeful view of his surroundings, indulged in a little playful talk with the young people before he sat down for a quiet game of chess with the vicar.

Jesse could not disguise the satisfaction he felt on observing that his father did not once look sternly at Oliver, or say a word to him that could cause him any annoyance. In high spirits he challenged his sister Grace to a game of backgammon, and soon became very earnest with her in his play, and apparently regardless of all else around him.

Charlotte and Miss Gordon were as usual busy with their needlework for the poor chil-

dren of the parish, while indulging in the quiet conversation the business in hand suggested. Oliver sat near them with a book in his hand, occasionally putting in a word or two by way of inquiry, or in answer to a question as a friendly argument arose between the workers of the difference of temper and general conduct to be observed in the children of the school.

Miss Gordon argued that the chief cause of the difference arose from their home training, and further, until the teachers could effectually deal with that, they would be able to produce no lasting effect on the Christian education of the children.

‘Then our Sunday-school teaching is a hopeless matter, I am afraid,’ rejoined Charlotte, ‘for if we cannot by direct influence reach the children, how can we hope to do so through the parents in the present state of the country? Of course, I am not speaking of Woodfield alone.’

‘It is a very difficult question,’ said Miss Gordon.

‘And what would you suggest as a cure?’ asked Charlotte.

‘I can suggest nothing,’ replied Miss Gordon, ‘for it appears to me that all we can hope to do is simply by patient work to modify the present

state of things. If there is anything to be done by which the parents can be effectually acted upon, it must be sought for by other means.'

'Ah, but who is to find the means?' asked Oliver.

'You, in part,' replied Miss Gordon.

'Oh yes,' said Oliver, 'a pretty thing for me to set about looking after. Why, if I could find them I should not know their use. My opinion is you had better leave the people alone, and let their children grow up according to their nature.'

'As we would sheep and oxen,' said Miss Gordon.

'And why not?' said Oliver. 'Do you think that if a boy is stupid you can make him wise by talking to him? If you do I don't.'

'We cannot make him wise, I daresay,' observed Charlotte; 'but it is not with what we call stupid children we are so much concerned, but the bad-tempered and wicked ones, with their parents.'

'But if they are born ill-tempered and grow wicked, who can help it?' asked Oliver.

'That is the question,' said Miss Gordon.

'Then I think you had better let the ques-

tion alone,' said Oliver. 'If a boy is born with a bad temper he will have a bad temper, and he cannot help it.'

'You would make us absolutely hopeless,' said Charlotte.

'Well,' said Oliver, 'I tell you what I think, but I know I am no match for you two, so I will go over to Jesse and Grace, and see how they are coming on with their game.'

'Oliver appears to have a touch of the fatalist about him this evening,' observed Miss Gordon.

'He talks a little at random,' replied Charlotte, 'but I am glad, under any circumstances, to hear him give utterance to an opinion of his own. There,' she continued, 'I have finished my frock for little Dixon, but it makes me sad to think of the change time will produce in that sweet, happy face of hers.'

'Let us hope that it will not be a sad change,' said Miss Gordon. 'I think her mother is a careful woman, though her father may be a little unsteady.'

The two chess players, who had sat with their eyes fixed on the rival army with scarcely a word passing between them but what related to the progress of the game,

now became a little lively in their movements, till Sir Edward exclaimed aloud,—

‘You have caught me at last, and I cannot escape.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr Gordon, ‘I believe it is all over with you. It has been a hard fight, and I have more than once found my king nearly as great a prisoner as yours is now.’

‘Fate has been against me,’ said Sir Edward; ‘and, unless you particularly wish it, I will not tempt it again to-night.’

‘Another game might turn the table upon me,’ said Mr Gordon.

‘I am quite satisfied that I could not mend my play to-night,’ replied Sir Edward; ‘so, if you please, we will finish with a little music.’

The young people were quickly around the piano, and with its aid and their own sweet voices, the evening passed pleasantly away.

The next morning, as the business of the breakfast was progressing, Sir Edward, addressing Jesse, said,—

‘I am going to the school board meeting this morning, and if you would like to go with me, I shall be pleased with your company.’

‘May I ask if anything is likely to occur there to keep one from going to sleep?’

‘That I cannot answer for,’ replied his father.

‘When you took me with you some time since,’ said Jesse, ‘I thought it was all very flat—stale; and I will leave Grace to complete the passage.’

‘Unprofitable,’ cried Grace; ‘I read it in Shakespeare not an hour since.’

‘Shakespeare before breakfast!’ said Sir Edward; ‘I am afraid, Miss Grace, that argues badly for the success of your lessons.’

‘I was not idling, papa; I only just chanced to see it.’

‘On the shelf, through the cover,’ suggested Jesse.

‘No such thing,’ replied Grace; ‘the book was open on the table, and I am almost certain you put it there, for Mrs Gibson said you had just left the room when I entered.’

‘I believe you are right,’ said Jesse; ‘an idea had crossed my mind about a historical personage the great poet has introduced in one of his plays, and I wished to see if I had correctly remembered the quotation.’

‘What! before breakfast?’ cried Grace; ‘what will papa say to you?’

‘Nothing in the way of censure, of course,’ replied Jesse; ‘you see your case and mine are totally different. I am a grave old man, and—’

‘You a grave old man!’ cried Grace, interrupting him; ‘what nonsense you talk. Where are your grey hairs?’

‘The ship that has them on board is at sea,’ replied Jesse. ‘But if you will wait for them, I will place them at your service.’

‘I shall have a long time to wait, don’t you think, Oliver?’

‘Well, I should rather think you would.’

‘You will go with me, Jesse,’ said Sir Edward; ‘you may not find it so dull to-day as on your former visit. We sometimes manage to get up a little debate with a spice of personality to flavour it. You,’ he said, addressing Oliver, ‘will not fail to take a long ride through the bracing air. While you, I suppose, Charlotte, if one wanted you, you would be found at the vicarage, or on vicarage business. You, I trust, Miss Grace, will give a good, sharp turn to your lessons with Mrs Gibson, and then follow Oliver’s example.’

‘Do you mean on my pony, papa?’ said Grace, with her bright eyes shining upon him.

‘Yes, if Oliver will call for you.’

‘Oh, I am certain he will; will you not, Oliver?’

‘Yes,’ said Oliver, ‘if you will promise not

to keep me waiting ; you know I don't like to be kept waiting.'

'For little girls !' put in Jesse.

'How naughty you are,' cried Grace ; 'I do wish you would be quiet.'

'I have ordered the carriage for ten o'clock,' said Sir Edward, as he rose from the table to go to the library to arrange some papers before leaving home.

He had scarcely seated himself when the old steward, Lea, entered the room and, having closed the door carefully behind him, said,—

'If you are not very busy, Sir Edward, I should be glad to speak to you.'

'I am busy,' replied Sir Edward, 'but if what you have to say will not take you long, I will listen to you.'

'You know, Sir Edward,' began the old man, 'I am not nearly so strong and able to get about as I was when I first entered your service, and—'

'I have heard no complaints of your not being able to perform your duties,' said his master, interrupting him ; 'but if you find you are not equal to them, you have the means at your disposal of taking a long rest.'

'Yes, I have saved up a little, but it is not that I mean.'

‘Well, tell me what it is you do mean, then.’

‘I think, Sir Edward, something should be done with that boy of Mr Montag’s at Mrs Brown’s.’

‘Oh, you wish to speak of him?’

‘Yes, Sir Edward. He has become very troublesome in the village, and when I spoke to him he was impudent to me, and Mrs Brown would have no control over him if she did not let him do just as he likes.’

‘Then you should speak to the schoolmaster, and let him take him in hand.’

‘I think, Sir Edward, if you would allow my son to look out another home for him at a distance, where he could be kept out of mischief, it would be better for every one.’

‘What mischief do you charge him with?’

‘He plays tricks, Sir Edward, with almost every one that comes in his way.’

‘I cannot do anything in the matter before I speak or write to Mr Montag. You know why he became so greatly attached to the boy, and that when he left Woodfield to go to his appointment at Bath he begged me to see that he was properly cared for. But perhaps you do not know that, out of his small stipend, he has promised to provide for the boy.’

‘He does not know the value of money yet,’ murmured the old steward.

‘That may be,’ said Sir Edward, ‘but I cannot do as you wish without his consent. He has approved himself worthy of the position he occupies, and in this matter I consider he has a claim upon me. You know how earnest Lady Harewood was for his and his sister’s welfare, and I have told you how seriously she entreated me, when she lay on her sick-bed, not to let them miss her protecting hand. You must not ask me to act without his consent.’

‘You have been very good to him,’ said the old steward.

‘I have merely kept my promise,’ rejoined Sir Edward; ‘and thus far I have been well rewarded; I have a very good opinion of Mr Montag’s judgment, and I must not forget his entreaty that I would have an eye to the boy.’

‘I think,’ said the old steward, ‘Mrs Brown lets him do too much as he likes; but I don’t wish to complain of her, Sir Edward, and I know you will see it is all right.’

‘Poor old fellow!’ murmured Sir Edward, when the servant had left the room; ‘I am afraid old age has not been content with touching your back and limbs, but has made itself felt in your brain. Well, well! I suppose we

must all in due time feel his heavy hand upon us.'

At ten o'clock Sir Edward and Jesse left the Hall for the place of meeting of the school board. There were but eight members, of whom two were clergymen of the Church of England, two ministers of congregations dissenting from it, three farmers, and their chairman—Sir Edward. Jesse took a seat with a few strangers in a place allotted to the public. A glance around told him the chances were the meeting would turn out a little more lively than the former one. All the members were present, and there was so marked a difference in the expression of their countenances that he felt assured, before a word was spoken, that he was in the presence of two rival parties.

There was a quiet complaisant smile on the lips of the clergymen, which spoke of an assured position of power, while a nervous twitching about the mouths of the dissenting ministers seemed to say—we must prepare ourselves for attack and defence, for we are in the presence of enemies.

The farmers looked thoughtful, and though near neighbours, did not appear to be on very intimate terms with each other, but it might

have been only Jesse's fancy, with no other foundation than that they had prepared their speeches, and found it necessary to keep quiet lest they should forget them; or it might be real, and arise from the fact that one farmed a thousand acres, another four hundred, and the other but one hundred and fifty.

The minutes of the last meeting having been read by the clerk, the battle began.

A minister rose to move that one of the resolutions just read should not be confirmed, as he contended it showed a purpose of introducing dogmatical teaching into schools, and was of a most illiberal character.

The other minister seconded the motion in a long, sharp speech, to the same purpose.

'It may not be amiss, I think,' said the chairman, 'before we proceed further, if I remind you that the resolution was put openly at the last meeting, and unanimously passed. Would it not be well to let the board know a little more fully than you have yet done, the great evils you expect will follow if the resolution is confirmed?'

'Neither I nor my friend was present at the last meeting,' said the first speaker, 'and we entirely disagree to anything being done of such a nature but by a full board.'

‘ Does any other gentleman wish to speak ? ’ asked the chairman.

The clergymen smiled at each other, and the farmers were all but silent.

Five to two, as might have been expected, settled the question.

‘ It was our duty to protest,’ said the first minister, ‘ and we wish it to go abroad to the public that we have performed our duty.’

Reports of the different schools under the board were then read, which appeared to excite little attention, until a complaint made by one of their officers, that the farm labourers were very remiss in sending their children to school.

This brought one of the farmers to his feet, who said he thought their officers were a little puffed up with the authority they had received from the board, and were using it tyrannically upon the labourers.

‘ Their duty is very simple,’ observed the chairman. ‘ It consists in their doing their best to get the children to school, and if they meet with opposition from the parents, to report the case to us, and, if necessary, request their attendance here, unless the offenders prefer being summoned before a magistrate.’

The clerk then read out a list of those whose children had been absent from school several

times during the last month. These, Sir Edward was pleased to see, did not reside on his property.

He had always acted up to what he considered his duty with respect to the labourers on his estate. He did not look upon his connection with them as ended when they had performed their work and received their weekly wage. He knew that most of the men had but a very superficial knowledge of the world in which they lived, and that however well-intentioned they might be, were always open to the influence of others who, for their own special advantage, would lead them from the path of honest industry and contentment to an imaginary condition in which they could be able to dictate terms to their employers, and by force obtain from them an increased return for their labour.

The selfish political and social agitators he held in supreme contempt. He knew they were not open to conviction of their wrong-doing, but he did not believe they were to be kept at a distance by mere talk, or by attempting to prove that everything was just as it should be, and if a stone were moved in the social or political edifice, the whole building would immediately fall to the ground, and the

power of England disappear from the world, like that of the great nations of old.

His mode of proceeding with his people partook far more of deeds than of words. On taking possession of his property, his first care was to discover the real condition of his labourers, both with respect to their dwellings and manner of living. The result of this was very soon apparent, not only in repairing and building of cottages, but in the more careful cultivation of their enlarged gardens and their general improved conduct.

He avoided the character of being one who wished to deprive the poor man of his beer by speaking of it as a poisonous drug, calculated to weaken the mind and fill the body with disease and death. ‘I do not object to your taking a pint of beer when you are thirsty and feel you want it,’ he would say, ‘but I warn you that, so far as I am able, I will keep you from drinking to excess and wasting in the beerhouse the means of increasing your and your families’ home comforts.’

It would have been a sore disappointment to him had any of his people been charged with neglecting to send their children to school. The three cases brought before the board were from a distance, and without the range of his

direct influence. There was nothing very noticeable in them. The parents had excuses in abundance ; but it was evident that the real cause of their negligence arose from the fact that they estimated the education children were said to be receiving at school as something that would be worse than useless to them when they became men and women.

And in this they were, perchance, to some extent right ; for is it not possible that the education in our schools in the present day is a little too ambitious, and the idea of opening a university course to every boy in our elementary schools very extravagant. What is to become of the country if the prize is to be only for intellectual excellence ? Will the labourer who has to work in the fields not become discontented with his lot, or will any one propose that the land should be allowed to go out of cultivation ?

And the girls who are to be mothers of a future generation, will they not need something much more homely than a knowledge of astronomy and its kindred subjects, with drawing, music, fancy needlework, and so on ? If their poor little heads are to be filled with ambitious thoughts of becoming ladies, or at least fitted for lady-like employment, who will then be left

to cook the dinners and keep the house free from dust and cobwebs? Will our lady-helps hold on to the time when the house, from cellar to garret, will be left entirely to them?

The business of the school board being finished, and mid-day scarcely passed, Sir Edward proposed that they should drive over to Downend, and call upon Mr Cresswell. Jesse would much rather have returned home to take his gun and go out for a stroll towards the keeper's house; but he had no excuse to offer for doing so, and therefore quietly acquiesced in the proposed trip.





## CHAPTER X.

‘**J**UST in time for luncheon, Sir Edward,’ cried Mr Cresswell, as the carriage was driven up to the door of Elston Court, by the side of which he was standing. ‘My wife and daughter are in the dining-room. Come in, come in; they will be delighted to see you at such a convenient hour.’

‘It did not strike me that we should find you at luncheon,’ said Sir Edward, ‘or we might have made our call a little later.’

‘You could not have made it at a better time—that is,’ he said, correcting himself, ‘unless you partook of luncheon before leaving home.’

‘We came direct from the school board meeting,’ said Sir Edward, on the impulse of the moment; ‘we finished early, and the day

being so fine, we set out at once for Downend instead of returning home.'

By this time they had reached the ladies, by whom they were received in the old cordial and friendly manner. Jesse had long been a favourite at Elston Court. Mr and Mrs Cresswell looked upon him, perhaps, too partially as a youth who would make his mark in the world in whatever profession or business he might choose to engage in. Nor was Edith less favourably disposed towards him, so that the welcome he received all round was of the most flattering description.

The luncheon over, Mr Cresswell observed to Sir Edward,—

‘I have been engaged this morning preparing for a little alteration in the orchard.’

‘Not to remove any of my old friends, I trust.’

‘None but what are absolutely worn out,’ replied Mr Cresswell. ‘A good neighbour now in Devonshire has sent me a hundred young trees, for which I was of course bound to make room. Perhaps you will take a turn with me and see what I am proposing to do. I daresay my wife and Edith will be able to entertain Jesse during our absence.’

‘Or rather you should say, papa,’ remarked Edith, ‘that he could entertain us.’

‘Our entertainment shall be mutual if you please,’ said Jesse. ‘We will talk of all we have seen and heard during the last month, and if we work out that before your reappearance, we will do a little in the way of speculation about the one to come.’

When Mr Cresswell and his visitor reached the orchard, they found several men busily employed in digging holes.

‘You seem to have made an admirable choice of your position for the young trees,’ observed Sir Edward; ‘but which of my old friends are you about to remove?’

‘Not one, if you have a word to urge for their preservation.’

‘I don’t like parting with old friends,’ said Sir Edward; ‘but of course if you are well advised that they are useless, they must away.’

Mr Cresswell called Harris, the head gardener, to come and show Sir Edward the trees he had marked for removal.

The first pointed out was a pear tree.

‘What! my old friend King William?’ exclaimed Sir Edward, ‘doomed to the axe. Poor old fellow! you have gone off sadly since our first acquaintance, when you used to invite me to your arms and feast me with your luscious fruit. More than once,’ he added, turning to

Mr Cresswell, 'have I been ensconced up there, covered with leaves and surrounded with fruit, busy as a boy could be in such a place, when you thought I was in my room cramming my head with knowledge.'

'Not very often,' said Mr Cresswell, with a laugh.

'Oftener than I can remember, and much oftener than I would at the time have ventured to tell you. And what disease is the poor fellow suffering from? It cannot be old age.'

'Not exactly,' replied Harris, 'though he did not start up out of the earth yesterday, Sir Edward. He is suffering from a canker, which would in the end kill him.'

'Ah!' said Sir Edward, on seeing a mark on an apple tree, 'and there is my old friend Wellington doomed to destruction. Surely the best go first.'

'He has been foolish enough, I am told,' said Mr Cresswell, 'to thrust his underground arms down into some poisonous substance, and feed greedily upon it.'

'It makes me sad,' said Sir Edward, 'to see my old friends thus dealt with, but I suppose it cannot be helped.'

'This one,' said Harris, pointing to another

tree, 'has been so damaged by the wind, that he has scarcely a sound limb left to his body.'

'Come, Mr Cresswell,' said Sir Edward, 'I think we had better go to your young friends; the old ones appear to have nothing but trouble before them. Often, when a boy, did I in the winter look upon their grey trunks and withered-looking, moss-covered arms, and wonder if they would ever bear fruit again; but the summer came, and I was pleased to think they had only been asleep, and had once more awoke to give me fruit as sweet and plentiful as before; but now they are going for ever. Were I still a child, I think I could weep over them if I saw them uprooted on the ground, never more to awake or welcome me to their leafy branches. You are making good large holes for the young ones, I see, and will fill up with suitable soil to guard them from seeking unwholesome nourishment. May they be fruitful, and reward your care!'

'The labour of planting is ours,' remarked Mr Cresswell, 'but the great harvest of the fruit must inevitably be for others.'

'Surely not altogether,' replied Sir Edward. 'I suppose, in the course of two or three years,' he said to the gardener, 'you expect to have them in good bearing?'

‘Two or three years,’ observed Mr Cresswell, ‘a young man may look upon as a small space of time, but when one has passed the limit of three-score years and ten, the end of even a single year is a long time to look forward to.’

‘That cannot be your case,’ said Sir Edward. ‘Time has passed lightly over you, and left you to look forward for the fruit of your orchard for many a busy year to come.’

‘There is always one consolation left to the planter,’ said Mr Cresswell. ‘However dreary his own personal outlook may be, he can rest assured that, while summer and winter last, he has not planted in vain. If his hands are by his side, others will be ready to reap the fruit of his labour.’

When they left the orchard, instead of returning direct to the house, Mr Cresswell led his visitor into a retired walk, well remembered by them for many an interesting conversation they had had together in years long past. For a while, his object in doing so did not become apparent. The state of the weather, and the kind of winter they might from present appearances look forward to, and other like trifling subjects, sufficed to supply them with food for talk ; and it was not until Sir Edward observed

that he thought it was time for them to return to the ladies, that Mr Cresswell began to unburden his mind to his friend of ideas which had during the last few days become very troublesome.

‘If you had not called upon me to-day,’ he began, in a hesitating manner, ‘I believe ere to-morrow by this time you would have seen me at the Hall.’

‘And a welcome guest there,’ said Sir Edward, seeing that his companion appeared at a loss for words.

‘That I am well assured of,’ said Mr Cresswell; ‘but I am afraid if you had asked me the cause of my visit, I should have had some difficulty in giving it a name. The truth is, I am being worried with a disagreeable matter that I had hoped I had done with.’

Then again he paused.

‘Yes,’ said Sir Edward; ‘I am listening to you.’

‘The annoyance arising from my daughter’s unfortunate marriage is again troubling me.’

‘Any news of the foolish fellow?’ asked Sir Edward.

‘Rather say wicked,’ rejoined Mr Cresswell bitterly. ‘He might perhaps have fairly been called foolish if his conduct had brought distress only

on himself ; 'but since it has had the effect of planting a dagger in the hearts of those whom he should have honoured and protected, the word foolish gives one but a very poor idea of him. But for the home that was open to receive her, he would have plunged Edith into difficulties fearful to think of.'

Sir Edward shuddered as if a cup of iced water had been suddenly poured down his back, and then said hurriedly,—

'And his father, I suppose, is no better ?'

'No,' replied Mr Cresswell ; 'the strong, healthy man has, by his son's misconduct, been brought to the brink of the grave.'

'Am I to understand,' asked Sir Edward, 'that you are expecting Mr Lyson's return ?'

'No,' replied Mr Cresswell ; 'it is not quite so bad as that. I cannot say I expect him ; though there is no accounting for the acts of a seeming madman. He knows the conditions upon which he draws upon me for his income ; and until he has tried to work further upon my fears from a distance, I shall not expect his return. He is now, I have reason to believe, at Marseilles, or in its neighbourhood, leading as reckless a life as it is possible for a man to lead who has not been utterly banned by all decent society. Whether he met my inform-

ant—an old friend of our family—by chance or design, I do not know, but he appears to have poured into his ear an account of some trouble into which he has fallen on the old subject of dishonoured bills. My friend writes—for it is only by letter I have received the unpleasant news—that, seeing his distress, he had advanced him a small sum of money, and that he would wait for my further instructions as to anything more I might wish him to do before his return to England, which he supposed would be in the course of a couple of months.'

'You are speaking of your friend's return.'

'Oh yes; the return of my graceless son-in-law was not even alluded to,' replied Mr Cresswell. 'Now what, under the circumstances, I ought to do, I am at a loss to discover. Edith knows nothing of the letter, and if I can help it, she shall not. Poor soul! she has had trouble more than enough about him already. Can you advise me?'

'I think,' replied Sir Edward, 'you should tell your friend that Mr Lyson is in receipt of a good income, and that beyond seeing that that was placed at his disposal, you could do nothing further for him. You will, of course, remit him the sum he has advanced;

and then, by way of postscript, you can beg him if he should chance to call upon you on his return, not to mention the matter to either your wife or daughter.'

'The thought of doing something of the kind,' said Mr Cresswell, 'has been present to my mind, and I will now at once enter upon my task.'

'I have not seen your poor vicar lately,' observed Sir Edward; 'and I think, now I am so near, I will call upon him; he at least is greatly to be pitied.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Mr Cresswell, 'his grey hairs are in truth being brought down with sorrow to the grave. But with respect to his daughters, if the case were not so serious, one might be disposed, to hear them talk, to look upon their brother's conduct as a mere jest. You long since observed how infatuated they were about their brother. I think as they grow older the disease, for I can call it by no better name, seems to grow upon them. I have but little patience to listen to them, but if you will take me with you, it will save me a more formal visit at some future time.'

'I suppose Edith does not often meet them?'

'No; but very seldom,' was the reply.

When they reached the vicarage they found the vicar seated in his arm-chair before the fire, closely wrapped up in his dressing-gown, shivering with cold.

As the gentlemen were introduced, he rose trembling from his chair, and said,—

‘I am ashamed you should find me so unprepared to receive you.’

‘I trust we have not disturbed you,’ said Sir Edward, ‘but as I was at Downend, I thought I should like to see you before I left.’

‘Thank you,’ said the vicar; ‘I am but poorly. I have been out in my parish a little this morning, and it has wearied me very much. I do not know how I should manage without my daughters, who do so much of my visiting for me.’

‘Do you not have your curate to assist you?’ asked Mr Cresswell.

‘Yes, but he is very young at his work,’ replied the vicar peevishly, ‘and does not get on very well with the poor people.’

‘He is a stranger,’ observed Mr Cresswell. ‘Perhaps in a little while you will find him more useful.’

‘I trust I shall,—I trust I shall,’ said the vicar, ‘for it is very hard upon me now. Ah, there

are my daughters at the door. Poor things, they will be very tired.'

'You appear to be suffering from a cold,' remarked Sir Edward. 'Are you in much pain?'

'I have a pain here,' he replied, as he placed his hand upon his heart, 'which no earthly medicine can touch; but it will be soon over,—it will be soon over, and I must not complain.'

'It is difficult to avoid doing so when one is in pain,' observed Sir Edward.

'Yes, yes; very, very difficult indeed, but my daughters tell me I must not complain.'

As he finished speaking his daughters entered the room, and very graciously returned the salutation of the visitors. Years were beginning to tell upon their sharpened features, and the grating noise they had bestowed upon their never very musical voices.

'Well,' said the vicar, 'did you finish my work for me?'

'Yes,' replied Miss Lyson, 'but the ignorant people are so dissatisfied with the curate, that they are full of complaints.'

'Oh, dear!' moaned the vicar, 'why am I left by my only son, who could so well help me if he would?'

'You must be patient, papa,' said Miss

Lyson, 'and wait till he can come. You know he told you when he last wrote that he would be with you as soon as possible.'

'Oh yes,' said the vicar, 'but that is an old story—a very old story.'

'You must not talk so,' said Dorothy, the younger sister. 'He will be sure to come soon. Do you not think so, Sir Edward?'

'Really,' replied that gentleman, 'I am afraid I am not sufficiently acquainted with his intentions to give an opinion respecting the time of his return.'

'I shall never see him again,' murmured the vicar.

'Oh, papa,' said Dorothy, 'how wicked you are to be so despairing. You should exert yourself to be cheerful now Sir Edward has called to see you, and not sit there like a poor lame old man, muffled up in your dressing-gown as if you were quite helpless.'

'I begged Sir Edward to excuse me. I think I told him that I was cold; but I don't know, my memory is very bad.'

'You are weary with your morning's work,' kindly observed Sir Edward, 'and I am afraid we broke in upon your rest.'

'I am very glad you called, but you see I

am not so strong as I used to be,' sighed the vicar.

'I trust we shall find you better when we call again,' said Mr Cresswell.

'Pray do not rise,' said Sir Edward.

'Yes, I will go with you to the door, though I am tired. You see I am still able to walk,' and, getting up from his chair while he was speaking, he tottered across the room to the door, with his shoulders up, his back curved, and his head thrust unmeaningly forward, not the picture but the reality of a broken-hearted father, mourning secretly over the worse than death of his son.

The gentlemen left the vicarage fully impressed with the idea that if a change in the vicar's health did not shortly take place, he would soon cease to be a burden to himself or any one else. They did not, however, speak their fears on their return to the ladies and Jesse.

'That was a capital ride we had yesterday, sir, with Miss Grace,' said Jasper to his master, when he took his hot water to him the next morning.

'You may think so,' replied Oliver, 'but I don't; and it will be a long time before I venture on such a ride again.'

'Ever so much better than always going along on the dusty old roads, I think,' said Jasper, 'and so does Miss Grace.'

'Don't talk to me about it,' said Oliver, 'I am all of a tremble when I think of the way she took to the hedges. Why, if she must go across the fields, why could she not go through the gates with me? Suppose her pony had thrown her off while going over a high hedge, she might have been killed; and if she had been killed, what would have been said to me for letting her do it?'

'No one could blame you for the pony's fault, but there was no fear of her falling off. She sits upon her pony as if she was growing to it, and springs up and down like the branches of a tree in a summer's breeze.'

'Well,' said Oliver, 'I know I will not go through the fields again with her to be frightened to death as I was yesterday, and so I shall tell her the first thing this morning.'

'Better ask her to show you how she sits, sir.'

'No; I will do nothing of the kind,' replied Oliver; 'I have quite enough to make me nervous without going out of my way to jump over hedges.'

'I am sorry you are so easily frightened,' said Jasper.

‘Easily frightened !’ repeated Oliver; ‘I don’t know what you can be thinking of. Is it not enough to frighten you when you see a lady ride as Grace does, over hedges and ditches, when one false step would send her, I don’t know where. Easily frightened !’ he again repeated. ‘Do you mean to tell me that I was easily frightened in the churchyard that night ?’

‘If you had only stood still and—’

‘Stood still !’ cried Oliver, interrupting him ; ‘would you have stood still had you been there alone as I was ?’

‘I think I should,’ said Jasper.

‘Yes, now you know what it was that was there ; but in the dark, with the old grim church on the one side, and the tombstone on the other with something moving upon it all in white, the case would perhaps appear a little different, even to you.’

‘I hope, when you meet the boy, you will not tell him he frightened you.’

‘Why not ?’ asked Oliver.

‘Because, if you do, he may be trying it on again.’

‘But you warned him not to do so again.’

‘Yes, I told him, if he ever tried to play such a trick again, I would put him under the

pump, and pump the water on his head till I had washed every bit of nonsense out of it.'

'And he promised not to do it again?'

'Yes,' replied Jasper; 'though at first he only laughed, and said I should find it rather a troublesome job. You will go to the cottage and see him.'

'Do you think it is worth the trouble?' asked Oliver.

'I think not, if it's only to see him; but then, you know you said you would go with me to see Mrs Brown. I think, between the two, you might get a little fun out of them.'

'But,' said Oliver, 'you will not leave me there alone with them?'

'Oh no, of course not; but when shall we go—before or after your ride?'

'Before; then I shall have an excuse to get away if I don't feel comfortable there. You will not let her talk much about ghosts?'

'Nor boys running about in white sheets,' added Jasper.

'Now,' said Oliver, 'you must not go on telling me of that, or I shall leave off talking to you.'

About twelve o'clock, as Jasper would have said, 'the look-in at Mrs Brown's cottage took place.' It stood by the side of a green shady

lane a few yards from the high road. As it belonged to Sir Edward Harewood and was so near the Hall, under any circumstance it would have been a neat, comfortable place, but there were special reasons why this should have had more than the ordinary attention of the owner.

Mrs Brown, though now nearly sixty years of age, had been, in the days of her vigour, a strong, active, and intelligent woman, to whom a great part of the villagers owed, if not life, a close attention early upon it. Many a time, in the dark, still night, had she been suddenly called upon, through the chattering teeth of a young husband, to go forth on her mission of usefulness and her country's good. For some years a sister had shared her cottage with her and attended to the household duties when she was away attending to the wants of the mothers of the rising generation. But she was now alone. The old enemy had carried off her sister, and now that Mr Montag had left for Bath, had it not been for the boy Stephen she would have been lonely enough.

For some months previous to her sister's death, she had given up her occupation into younger hands. With the little she had saved, and the money she received on account of the

boy, she was enabled to avail herself of the services of a neighbour to come in for an hour or two during the day to do the rough work incident to housekeeping. For the placing and keeping in order her well rubbed furniture and ornaments she would have no hands touch them but her own.

When her charge, Stephen Elvin, was at school, after having satisfied herself that everything was in order, she would sit down and read a portion of her Bible, chiefly in the places where angels' visits to the earth were spoken of, or sorcery or witchcraft brought under notice. Numerous as such passages are, not one of them, she believed, had escaped her notice, nor in the New Testament either.

And when reminded by any one that the events she spoke of occurred in years long gone by, she would bring out a well-worn old pamphlet bearing on its front page the strange title of 'Life after Death,' which was intended to confirm the faith of her visitors by proving to them that spirits were as freely passing around us now as they were round the people of old.

She did not attempt to force her opinions upon others, as she had learnt that to many it appeared an unprofitable subject. Many of her old friends occasionally looked in upon

her, and amongst the number the old house steward. Through him she received her pay for the boy Stephen, though she had reason to believe that the boy was anything but a favourite, and the same might be also said of Mr Montag before he left Woodfield. To a stranger, his manner to her would have appeared a little uncertain, or, as if he had not quite made up his mind whether he would treat her as a friend or an enemy. In truth, for years past he had seldom left her with a smile upon his face.

But it was very different when Miss Montag, having in charge the keeper's youngest child, called to see her brother, and after he was gone to Bath, the boy who had saved his life. At the sight of them Mrs Brown's countenance would light up with pleasure, and having welcomed Lizzie, she would draw the little fellow to her and fondle over him as earnestly as if he had been her own child. Whatever change time might be working in her strength, it was evident it had not touched the depth of feeling with which she had ever regarded children,—“Their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in Heaven,” she would murmur. ‘So it was said by one who could not be mistaken, and so I believe it is now.’



## CHAPTER XI.

**A**S Oliver and his attendant Jasper, on their visit to Mrs Brown, turned from the high road into the green lane, they encountered Stephen Elvin, who was amusing himself by slashing a pond with a long withe to the great annoyance, if not alarm, of two ducks and a drake, who a moment before had been sailing calmly about in quiet security. As soon as he saw the new comers, he sprang up from his half recumbent position, and darted down the lane at a rate which alarmed Mrs Brown, who happened to be at her door as he passed.

‘Stephen, Stephen!’ she cried, ‘what is the matter? Where are you going?’

But the boy did not stop to say what was wrong, or whither he was going.

‘Why, bless the child,’ she cried, ‘where in the name of goodness can he be going to?’

As she moved a few steps from the door to take in a further stretch of the road, she saw the young squire, as she was wont to call Oliver, with Jasper coming towards her. She needed no further explanation of Stephen's disappearance. 'The little rogue,' she murmured, 'he has been up to his tricks again. I think he has the life of twenty people in his little body.'

'Well, Mrs Brown,' said Jasper, 'I have brought Mr Oliver to see you.'

'I should have been quite as well pleased to see Mr Oliver alone.'

'Now, Mrs Brown,' said Jasper, 'don't bear malice. Forgive and forget, that's the thing, you know.'

'I can forgive, but not forget rudeness,' said Mrs Brown.

'Please, sir,' said Jasper, in a tone of mock humility, 'speak a good word for me. You see when I was here a little while ago, Mrs Brown and I did not quite agree.'

'I do not think he meant to offend you,' observed Oliver. 'We saw your little fellow at the top of the lane, but instead of stopping to speak to us he ran frightened away.'

'Not frightened,' said Mrs Brown; 'Stephen is never frightened.'

'Never frightened,' said Oliver doubtfully;

‘and is he good, and always does what you tell him to do?’

‘Yes, he is a dear, good boy, always at home lively, but never wicked.’

‘Truthful, honest, and so on,’ put in Jasper.

‘Do you get a good account of him from school?’ asked Oliver.

‘Yes,’ replied Mrs Brown; ‘only he’s a little too lively and quick for the other boys. He can learn his own lesson, and then plague them when they are learning theirs.’

‘And he plagues people out of school sometimes Jasper tells me.’

‘You must not believe all Jasper says about him, sir. Though he is a little too quick for most people.’

‘And how do all your pretty things escape from being broken?’ said Oliver, as he looked round the room.

‘He never touches them,’ said Mrs Brown. ‘He is always good with me, and is as pleased to see the house kept clean and in order as I am. Ah, here he is!’ she continued, as the boy was seen peeping in at the door. ‘Come in, Stephen! Here is Mr Oliver come to see us.’

‘Yes, and Jasper too, I suppose,’ said the boy.

‘You are not afraid of me, are you?’ said Jasper.

‘Afraid! what do you mean?’ said the boy, coming boldly into the room.

‘There—there’s a spirit,’ said Mrs Brown approvingly.

‘No; I’m not a spirit,’ said Stephen, ‘I’m only a boy.’

‘But boys have spirits always near them,’ said Mrs Brown.

‘So you have often told me, but I have never seen one yet, and as for my own, I don’t know where it is.’

‘But you will when you get older.’

‘Shall I? Well, I can’t make it out. You told me they were always in white, and so I tried to make myself one.’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Brown, ‘and that was very naughty.’

‘And how did you do it?’ nervously asked Oliver.

‘I got a sheet off my bed, and put it all round me, and a night-cap on my head, and went out into the churchyard. I think ever so many people ran away from me; but when the sheet fell off, I found I was only the boy I was before I went out.’

‘Did you ever see a real spirit, Mrs Brown?’

asked Oliver, in a low voice little above a whisper.

Mrs Brown cast a scrutinising glance upon Oliver to see if he was in earnest, and then said in a subdued tone, 'Yes, I believe I have.'

'Oh yes, and more than one,' said Jasper.

'Please tell me, in what shape?' whispered Oliver.

'Sometimes like angels, beautiful to look upon, and sometimes—'

'Yes,' murmured Oliver, in breathless expectation.

'And sometimes like ugly creatures too dreadful to—'

'Now if you are going away amongst them again,' said the boy, interrupting her, 'I am off to school. I have heard all about them, but they only come in the dark, so there is no chance of seeing them now.'

'But are you not afraid in the dark?' asked Oliver.

'Not a bit,' said the boy. 'I suppose they know I don't care for them, and so they keep out of my way.'

'But if you are never afraid,' said Jasper, 'why did you run away when you saw us coming down the lane?'

'Just to make you run after me, that Mr

Oliver might see which could run fastest ; and now I'm off again if you like to try ?'

As he scampered up the lane, Oliver said with a sigh, ' I wish I could feel as he does. I think I must often come to see you, Mrs Brown, and get you to tell me the stories you have told him ; perhaps I shall then grow as fearless as he is. Do you think we have always a spirit near us, and ready to help us in our troubles ?'

' Have you not read in your Bible that it is so ? ' asked Mrs Brown.

' Yes,' said Oliver, ' But was that written for us ? '

' It was written for all times and everybody,' said Mrs Brown, ' as I understand it.'

' Well, I certainly will come and see you again,' said Oliver ; ' but we must go now.'

' Behaved better this time,' said Jasper.

' A little,' said Mrs Brown ; ' but still there is great room for improvement.'

As the two returned to the Hall, an indefinable expression might be seen passing and repassing over the features of Oliver. His visit to the cottage had been chiefly to assure himself of the truth of the churchyard ghost as it had been explained to him by Jasper, and by what he had just learnt from the boy, all doubt

had left his mind. A more serious, and if possible a more perplexing thought, however, had taken its place. He had expected to hear Mrs Brown speak about ghosts and goblins that fly about over the earth, just as if they had nothing else to do but to frighten people out of their wits, yet she had said not a word of the kind. He had heard her speak calmly and very seriously of something she seemed to feel and understand.

‘Is it possible,’ he thought, ‘that I have an angel always by my side sent to me from heaven to help me along the road of life? If it is so, why am I so different from others? Why does it not strengthen me and help me to conquer my nervousness when I am in the presence of any one who I feel is my superior? I must think about it and see Mrs Brown again, and have a long talk with her.’

‘I do not think,’ he said to Jasper, ‘that Mrs Brown is quite the person I thought she was.’

‘She seemed much quieter when she got upon her ghost stories to-day,’ said Jasper, ‘than when I saw her last.’

‘I suppose you provoked her and made her angry,’ said Oliver.

‘Very likely,’ admitted Jasper, ‘for I had but little patience with her nonsense.’

‘Did you think she talked nonsense to-day?’ asked Oliver.

‘Well, I can’t say,’ replied Jasper. ‘I only know I don’t understand her, and I think you will say the same if you can get her to talk a little more freely to you.’

‘But if what she believes is true, and—’

‘Yes,’ said Jasper, interrupting him, ‘but she did not tell you all she believes; and when you hear her talk of ghost stories as seriously as she does of her Bible, you will perhaps grow doubtful, though I daresay she is better than I am.’

Insensibly Jasper had become for him very serious, and what he had been in the habit of looking upon as a jest, assumed another character in his eyes. Oliver at the same time was doubtless greatly impressed with what he had heard. But when they reached the Hall, the one to go into the dining-room, to take his place where he was never fairly at his ease, and the other to mingle with his fellow-servants, old thoughts returned, and the new ones at least for a time faded from their minds.

‘And so you have been to call upon Mrs Brown?’ said Grace to Oliver. ‘Some people say she is a queer old woman, but I like her, and I think she is a dear old body.’

‘She was very kind to me,’ said Oliver.

‘Yes,’ said Grace, ‘and she knows everything about everybody who has lived in the village for the last fifty years I do believe, and as for her boy, there is no one like him.’

The old steward who stood near flushed up a little as he listened, and his lips moved, but he did not speak; whatever his feelings might be towards Mrs Brown, he had taken a great dislike to Stephen Elvin, and with difficulty kept the knowledge of it to himself.

‘The boy Stephen seems a lively little fellow,’ said Oliver.

‘And very mischievous too, I am afraid. I hear some sad accounts of his tricks in the village,’ observed Miss Harewood.

‘Merely childish, I hope,’ remarked Sir Edward. ‘Lea has been telling me that he is afraid the boy is getting beyond the control of Mrs Brown.’

‘I am not of his opinion, then,’ rejoined Miss Harewood. ‘From what I have lately seen and heard of him, I imagine she is the only one in the village, excepting his schoolmaster, who can control him.’

‘Do you hear that, Lea?’ said Sir Edward.

‘Yes, Sir Edward,’ replied the old man, ‘Miss Harewood is always very kind to

children, and I know she does not like to think ill of any one.'

'But what have you seen to think ill of him?'

'I do not think so ill of him, miss, as of the others' mismanagement,' replied Lea.

'Are you going out with your gun?' asked Sir Edward of Jesse.

'Yes, I think so,' was the reply.

'I am so glad,' said Grace, 'that you have given up your study for going amongst the black people who kill and eat one another. If you had gone to Africa, we should never have seen you again.'

'Perhaps I shall go after I leave Oxford,' rejoined Jesse.

'No, you will not,' retorted Grace. 'By that time you will have grown too wise to throw yourself away amongst savages.'

'You will take your gun and go out with your brother,' said Sir Edward to Oliver.

'I am just going out for my ride,' replied Oliver.

'You can make it a short one to-day, and go with Jesse afterwards.' As Oliver left the room to mount his pony, which Jasper had brought to the door, his father added, 'You will be back in an hour, and ready for your

gun ;' and then turning to Jesse, he said, ' And now, although I could not spare the afternoon for the woods, I have an hour at my disposal for a short walk.'

In a few minutes they were out in the shrubbery, accompanied by Grace, who had in her little basket some scraps collected from the table to carry out to the birds.

' Papa,' said Grace, ' I wish you would build me an aviary just under that holly-tree. It would be so nice in the winter to know that the dear birds had a warm shelter.'

' Would you deprive them of their liberty ? '

' Oh no, papa, that I would not. I only want it to shelter them in cold weather. It should be always open for them to go out and in as they liked.'

' Your pensioners appear in excellent condition,' said Jesse; ' and I could almost fancy some of them know you.'

' Of course they do, and I know them,' replied Grace.

' By name ? ' asked Jesse.

' Yes ; look at that black, jolly fellow there, who is watching us,—his name is Bob the Winker, and there is Mrs Bob, his wife, by his side ; and the thrush over there, his name is Pet the Songster. He is the little fellow who

has been singing to us so prettily near the windows.'

'You have a long list of them.'

'Oh yes, a very long one.'

'Written out in a very scholarly hand.'

'Now, Jesse,' cried Grace, 'you are laughing at me, and yet I think I write almost as well as you do.'

'If, by a little more practice,' said Sir Edward, 'you can make yourself quite sure of it, you may look upon the aviary as already secure to shelter your large fluttering family.'

'Oh, thank you, papa!' cried Grace; 'and now good-bye, little birds, for I must not lose a moment before I begin my practice.' Saying which, she ran back to the Hall.

'I think,' observed Sir Edward, 'Grace's idea of a winter shelter for her birds is not by any means to be spoken lightly of. If there is any truth in the old adage that when the hawthorn and holly are covered with red, a sharp, cold winter may be expected. I think I never saw the trees and bushes so loaded with berries as they are this autumn.'

'They add greatly to the beauty of the scenery, but if they foreshadow a very severe winter, what will poor people say to them?'

'I trust our poor will be prepared to meet

it,' said Sir Edward, 'as it has been my constant aim to make them thrifty.'

'And I think they have followed your advice,' said Jesse; 'but I was not thinking of them alone, but of the poor generally throughout the country.'

'Ah!' rejoined Sir Edward, 'that is a large subject, and one very difficult to be dealt with satisfactorily, and I am afraid it will remain so until every person who employs labourers takes more interest in their welfare than at the present time he is in the habit of doing.'

'And do away with the idea that there is anything derogatory in labour if a man works honestly in his position, whatever that may be.'

'Yes,' said Sir Edward; 'and if nature has fitted him for a higher class of work than his neighbour, to use his greater responsibility without pride or arrogance.'

'The training for such a purpose must be begun early,' said Jesse.

'I look upon it,' said Sir Edward, 'as one of the most difficult problems of our age, to know how to deal with a youth who shows greater ability for study than his fellows, and particularly so when at school. I once thought that such a boy should be taken by the hand and lifted into a higher sphere than his friends

could afford to place him. But I confess that I am becoming doubtful of such a case now, for when a boy who has been assisted to rise in the estimation of the world, turns round and treats with contempt his former associates and friends, it becomes a very serious question whether it would not have been better to have left him unnoticed until he had been able to use his reasoning faculties to better effect.'

'Judging from the examination papers one meets with,' said Jesse, 'it appears that they are framed chiefly for the clever boys.'

'Yes,' replied Sir Edward, 'and I am afraid I have hitherto looked too favourably upon the idea that if we could educate the clever boys, they would in turn assist to bring up the dull ones; but the youth I see in the distance crossing the park has given me much cause to doubt if an act of the kind we are speaking of, however well intended, may not prove rather a curse than a blessing.'

'You allude to Philip Lea,' said Jesse.

'Yes, and I must confess that he has greatly disappointed me,' replied Sir Edward. 'All his education appears to be confined to his head, while his heart has grown cold to the very instincts of nature.'

'I cannot tell why it is so,' said Jesse, 'but I

have a positive dislike to be near him. His pompous, conceited manner makes me feel that he is safer out of my reach than within it.'

'I am sorry he has annoyed you.'

'He has not done anything personally offensive to me,' said Jesse, 'but often of late, when he has crossed my path, I have felt that if I had a horsewhip in my hand, I must lay it about the conceited fellow's shoulders.'

'I repeat,' said Sir Edward, 'that I am sorry he has so much annoyed you, and I will take care that it goes no further. I will as soon as possible send him away to a situation at a distance. I did hope,' he continued, with a heavy sigh, 'that when he returned from his unfortunate exhibition in London he would have applied the knowledge of the world he had learnt there to better purpose; but he has proved himself a self-willed, undutiful boy, and must be dealt with accordingly.'

'I would not have you send him away on my account,' said Jesse.'

'It will not be on that alone,' said Sir Edward. 'I have myself not been an unob servant witness of his general behaviour since his return, and though I am so little satisfied with him, yet, for the respect I feel for his father, I shall make it my duty to see that he is not

cast uncared for upon the world. I will write to a gentleman in the north to provide him with a situation, and keep a friendly eye upon him for a year or two.'

'I trust he will have a sharp master,' said Jesse, 'who will keep him to his work, for his conceit is insufferable.'

'You should not let so small a matter anger you.'

'I feel a little ashamed of it myself,' said Jesse, 'so I will say no more about him. Ah!' he continued, 'here comes Oliver, galloping along like a Saracen on his war-horse.'

'Rather like a lady in a gentle canter,' rejoined his father, 'though I think, upon the whole, he is in the way of improvement.'

'Very far advanced in it,' rejoined Jesse.

'You will now take him with you to meet Smith, while I go and finish my letters.'

'I hope I have not worried you?' said Jesse.

'No, I have enjoyed my stroll with you very much.'

As soon as Sir Edward had left the dining-room for their walk in the shrubbery, the old steward said to his son,—

'George, I think I have stopped indoors too much of late, so I will go out and take a little

walk. This dining-room work tires me more than ever, and I don't feel very well, but if Sir Edward asks for me, you need not tell him I am out of sorts, or he will be dosing me as he does Mr Oliver.'

'If you are not well, you ought not to go out alone,' said his son. 'You know you told me the other day that you would not leave the Hall again without a companion? Why not let one of the men go with you?'

'He would only tease me about something I don't care to listen to. I will take my stick, and if I don't feel all right, I will come in again.'

'I think it is a pity you do not give up your dining-room attendance; you know every one would be pleased if you did.'

'And you amongst the rest?' said the old man.

'Yes,' said the son, 'as I see it tires you very much, and I am afraid every moment you are there one of the footmen will topple you over.'

'Will they topple me over?' said the old steward. 'I should like to catch them attempting to do so, the poor, penniless rascals. Do you want them to kill me that you may get my place and my money?'

‘No, nothing of the sort,’ said George good-naturedly.

‘Then, why do you keep telling me that I should stop quietly in my room, when you know I should fret myself to death there?’

‘It is only to keep you from hurting yourself, or being hurt by others.’

‘Who dare hurt me?’ cried the old man, getting very angry. ‘Do you think that because I am not able to knock down a fellow, I am to be toppled over and—’

‘Father,’ said George, ‘no one would try to injure you; but while you are not able to walk without your stick or some one to lean upon, you must see that you are in danger of being run against by the men.’

‘Let them run against each other if they like,’ was the quick retort; ‘but they had better be careful they don’t run against me.’

‘I will tell them to be careful,’ said the son.

‘Better mind your own business, and leave me to take care of myself.’

‘I did not wish to make you angry,’ said George.

‘Angry!’ retorted the old man, ‘Who said I was angry? I only want you and everybody else to understand that I will not be put out

of my place in the Hall, until I am ready of my own free will to go.'

Leaving the Hall with the help of his stick, the old steward made his way direct to the cottage of Mrs Brown. He had something on his mind that he wished to speak to her about; but at that time it was destined not to be spoken. On reaching the door he found the woman there doing the rough work, but Mrs Brown was not at home.

'Where is she gone?' he asked.

'To see Mrs Smith, who has a sick child.'

'Children are always sick or giving trouble one way or other,' growled the old man. 'What is the matter with it?'

'It was stung with a wasp this morning,' was the reply.

'Stung with a wasp!' he said contemptuously; 'is that all?'

'The sting of a wasp is very painful, sir.'

'Take care,' cried the old man, 'there is one on your window now. What are you about? Don't go near it. You will drive it out upon me.'

While he was speaking, the woman made an attempt to catch it with her handkerchief, but failing, the wasp gave her no time for a second attack, but fled out of the door, as if intent on settling on the nose of Lea.

‘Whisk, whisk,’ cried the old man, turning about like a top and whirling his handkerchief over his head. ‘Come out, come out, and drive it away, or I shall be stung to death.’

‘Hallo, grandfather,’ sounded a voice in his ear. ‘Why, what are you doing? Dancing without music.’

‘A wasp, a wasp,’ cried the old man. ‘Can’t you see it?’

‘Yes,’ replied Philip, ‘but if you are quiet it will not hurt you.’

‘Quiet!’ roared the old man, still whirling his handkerchief round his head, ‘I would as soon be quiet by the kitchen fire sitting on an open barrel of powder. Oh dear! oh dear! will you not drive it away?’

‘I will do something better than that,’ said Philip, as he struck it to the earth with his hand, and put his foot upon it.

‘Are you going to the Hall?’ panted out the old man.

‘I am going by it,’ said Philip.

‘Then lend me your arm, for that wasp has made me as weak as a rat.’

‘I think it had taken a fancy to your nose,’ said Philip; ‘but I would not then frighten you by saying so.’

‘I am not easily frightened,’ said the old man.

‘I have long known that by the way in which you keep order in spite of anything that is said against you.’

‘Who says anything against me?’

‘No one in my hearing,’ said Philip, ‘or I would knock him down!’

‘Thank you,’ said the old man. ‘It does me good to hear you speak like that. The under ones want some knocking down, they are all so lazy. There will soon be no one to do the work, and then we must all starve, I suppose.’

‘You will not be likely, grandfather,’ said Philip.

‘You think I have money, but I am very poor.’

By the side of the road along which they were passing, the stump of a tree presented to Philip the opportunity of saying to him,—

‘Grandfather, do you not think it would be a good thing for you to sit down and take a rest before you get too tired?’

‘I am not tired,’ was the sturdy reply; ‘only I have a little touch of lumbago to-day, and that makes walking rather awkward.’

‘You are not in a hurry, I suppose, so you can have a good long rest here.’

‘Don’t you want to be going?’ asked the old man.

‘No,’ replied Philip; ‘I’m off duty now.’

‘Why, I heard Mr Jesse say they were going out with their guns this afternoon.’

‘Where?’ asked Philip.

‘Oh, I don’t know; but I daresay somewhere down by Smith’s place. Oh ay, and it is your place too! Don’t you find it rather dull down there?’

‘Yes, and I am tired of it,’ said Philip; ‘and I have been thinking, grandfather, that I would ask you to help me to get back to London again.’

‘You did not do very well on your last visit,’ said the old man, looking askance at his grandson, to see how he would take the allusion to his late trouble.

‘I fell into bad hands then; but I shall know better next time, if you will advance me a trifle for the trial.’

‘Ask your father for the trifle.’

‘I have,’ replied Philip; ‘but he says he cannot spare me another shilling.’

‘I don’t believe him,’ said the old man; ‘but if he is poor, it is his own fault. He is always giving something away.’

‘But you have been more careful.’

‘Have I? Well, I suppose I have a little in hand; but look at your strength and mine, and then tell me if you think I ought to help you or you me. But how much do you want?’

‘Enough to take me to London and keep me there for a few weeks.’

‘I am sorry I cannot help you.’

‘I would return it with interest.’

‘Interest!’ rejoined the old man. ‘Oh yes, of course you would think of that, but where is your security?’

‘My word of honour.’

‘That’s not business. But would your father like you to go?’

‘Will you give him your opinion,’ said Philip, ‘if he asks you if it is right I should idle my time away here?’

‘He is too fond of his own opinion to listen to me.’

‘I think ten pounds would do, if you could oblige me.’

‘Now, suppose I could find ten pounds, would your father be answerable for its return with interest?’

‘If he would not, you will have my word of honour,’ said Philip.

‘Is that all?’ said the old man. ‘Well, I will think about it.’

‘When will you decide?’ asked Philip.

‘In a day or two. But we must be going now.’

‘And if there is any shooting going on, I must go too.’

‘I thought you said you were off duty?’

‘So I am; but let us go, I will see you to the door.’

‘Thank you,’ returned his grandfather; ‘but I will not trouble you any further. I have my stick and I can now get along very well alone,’ saying which, he hobbled off towards the Hall, leaving Philip in considerable doubt whether he had gained anything by his unusual complaisance. ‘Patience, patience,’ he muttered; ‘I shall break down after all, if I am not very careful. Sir Edward has something in his head about me, I know; but I will have no more of his patronage, since I am made to feel that it is bestowed on me in acknowledgement of the faithful services of my father, a servant—nothing better than a domestic servant. I hate myself for being the son of such a time-serving creature.’

It would be difficult to analyse the state of his mind as he bent his steps rather hesitatingly towards the keeper’s house. When he left his bed that morning he had persuaded

himself that he would go very coolly to work upon the business before him. In spite of his ambitious thoughts, he could not disguise the fact from himself that he was in love with Miss Montag. The jealous pangs that shot through his heart spoke to him but too plainly of the fact. Would she ever listen to him, or was she in love with another? That was the question he must have answered!

Yes, he had left his bed that morning resolved to put an end to his doubts. For some days Mrs Smith had been more than usually obliging, while Miss Montag appeared less cold and reserved, though he could not help feeling that she threw every obstacle in his way to prevent him from securing a private interview with her. Not a word had passed between them relative to their encounter on her return from the little tea-party.

After loitering in and about the house to obtain the desired interview, he muttered, 'I shall go mad if I stop moping about here all the day. I will go and have a good long walk, and see if I can get rid of my tormenting thoughts.'

It was then, while pursuing his walk across the park, that he was seen by Sir Edward and Jesse, and that he afterwards met his

grandfather at Mrs Brown's door. On leaving him and returning to the keeper's house, the opportunity he had been so long waiting for was now unexpectedly presented to him. He found Miss Montag sitting alone at work and, as far as he could see, no one near.

Mrs Smith having done all she could to allay the pain in her child's face from the sting of the wasp, had, by the advice of a friend, taken him to the doctor in the village. Miss Montag did not see Philip until he was too close upon her to permit her to leave the room without being absolutely rude to him, as it would seem, without cause.

'What! all alone, miss?' said Philip as he entered.

'Yes,' replied Miss Montag; 'Mrs Smith has taken little Georgie to the doctor, but I am expecting her back very soon.'

'I thought, when I went out, the doctor must see him,' said Philip, as he seated himself by her side. 'And where is Mr Smith?'

'In the preserves, I believe.'

'Alone?'

'No; Mr Oliver and Mr Jesse, with Jasper and Dixon went with him; but they have not been long gone, and if you wish to join them, the sound of their guns will guide you.'

‘But I do not wish to join them,’ said Philip, ‘I would much rather stop here with you and talk to you of something I have had on my mind for a long time. You remember when you were coming home from your tea-party that I met you?’

‘Yes, I remember.’

‘I wanted to speak to you then, when that fellow Dixon frightened you away.’

‘He did not frighten me,’ said Miss Montag.

Philip bit his lip, but continued,—‘I wanted to tell you, Miss Montag, that you had my happiness in your keeping, and that my future would depend on the answer you gave me to my declaration that I loved you.’ As he spoke, he sprang up from his chair to the no little alarm of Lizzie, who rose also, but did not speak. ‘Oh, Miss Montag,’ he continued, ‘do not be alarmed, I am not going to be rash and speak hasty words that I may afterwards be sorry for. Only tell me that you do not reject my suit, and I will be satisfied.’

‘You will not ask me to decide at once,’ said the agitated girl.

‘If you cannot accept me now,’ cried Philip, ‘you will never. You have seen some one else you prefer to me.’

‘No one but yourself has asked me such a question ; but I cannot decide now, and your father—’

‘My father !’ cried Philip, ‘what has he to do with it ? Pray, leave him out of the question. Do you think I need ask his consent that I may marry you ?’

‘That I cannot say ; but for myself, I must consult my brother, and I shall feel I am in duty bound, as I cannot speak to Sir Edward Harewood myself, to get my brother or Mr Smith to speak to him for me.’

‘And why should he be spoken to ?’ asked Philip.

‘You know he has been very kind to me and my brother.’

‘I have always heard that it was Lady Harewood who took charge of you. Sir Edward has only carried out her instructions, and cannot interfere with your choice. Give me but one smile to keep hope alive and I will wait.’

‘I dare not deceive you,’ said Lizzie, ‘for until I have consulted my friends I cannot bid you hope.’

‘Then you love another !’ exclaimed Philip. ‘Why do you seek to disguise the truth ? I will know the man.’

‘ You seem unaware,’ said Miss Montag warmly, ‘ that you have no right to speak to me in such a manner.’

‘ You force me to do so,’ retorted Philip.

‘ I must not forget my duty to others,’ said Lizzie.

‘ Your duty!’ cried Philip, ‘ is, of course, to take care of yourself in the best way you can.’

‘ Had there been no one to take care of me besides myself when I was left motherless in the hands of strangers, I should, I fear, have fared but poorly. But let us not talk of our obligations to others, but act as if we felt them.’

‘ And give up our chance of happiness to the will of others?’

‘ Yes, if our duty requires it,’ replied Miss Montag.

‘ Whatever duty may require,’ cried Philip, ‘ I care not. But do as you say. Take time and consult your friends. I will wait your answer; but as you value the life of another, let it be to the point, for I will not be longer trifled with.’

And saying that, he hurried out of the room in an uncontrollable passion.



## CHAPTER XII.

**L**EFT to herself, Miss Montag, resuming her work, strove to compose her thoughts and be as quiet now she knew the truth as when she only suspected it. But the task was too much for her strength. In spite of all her endeavours to be calm, her pulse would beat with unwonted energy, and her fingers tremble so that she could scarcely hold the needle in her hand. She rose from the chair and went to the window, hoping rather than expecting to see Mrs Smith on her return with the child from the doctor.

But all was still and quiet without. Neither Mrs Smith nor any other human being was in sight. Then a sudden fear seized upon her. Might not Philip return. She knew he was in his room. She had heard his door slammed to immediately after he left her. Suppose he

should return and use violence to force her to comply with his wishes? What could she do? Suddenly she rushed to the door, and in an instant locked and bolted it.

Then looking anxiously round the room as her fears grew upon her, she began to place all the furniture she could move before the door and window, to render his re-entrance as difficult as possible. For sometime, however, it appeared her precautions were not needed. All was still in his part of the house. Gradually she became a little less excited, and sat down, earnestly hoping that she would soon be delivered from her voluntary imprisonment by the approach of some one to the house.

Hearing footsteps on the gravel without, she for a moment thought relief was at hand. But she was bitterly disappointed when, on peeping between the things she had placed before the window, she saw the dreaded Philip within a few yards of the door, with his face pale as death, and his lips compressed closely together, as if bent on some terrible purpose. For a brief space he stopped, and looked cautiously and searchingly around. Then he moved towards the door, and she heard the latch rise responsive

to his touch, but the double barrier within prevented the door from flying open as it doubtless otherwise would have done.

After one or two more futile attempts with the latch, he muttered,—

‘She has turned the key upon me, but I must see her, or at least speak to her. Our affair must not be left as it is. I have let her see too much of my mind to leave her, without in some way or other accomplishing my purpose. I must quickly do my best to make her feel that, after this day’s work, it will be to her interest to acknowledge me as her lover. But if she has placed herself beyond my reach, I must be very submissive—beg her to pardon my rashness, and not think too seriously of what I said in my excitement arising from her coldness.’

Satisfied that the door was closed against him after gently knocking, he called out in as calm a tone as he could command,—

‘Miss Montag, please open the door and speak to me.’

‘I can hear you here,’ said Lizzie timidly.

‘I cannot bawl out what I wish to say to you,’ cried Philip, ‘and if you will not unlock the door, I shall be tempted to force it open. Will you let me in?’

‘No,’ returned Lizzie; ‘until I am assured

you are in a better temper than you were when you left me a few minutes since.'

'You made me angry,' said Philip, 'and I want to tell you why. Will you open the door?'

'No;' replied Miss Montag resolutely; 'not until there is some one on the outside more than yourself.'

Philip hearing this, and knowing that he had no time to lose, tore up a paving-stone from the path, and lifted it above his head as if with all his force he was going to dash it against the door, and thus force an entrance, when a restraining thought crossed his mind, and caused him to hesitate for a few seconds, and then to return the stone to the place from whence he had taken it.

'I am not yet quite prepared for extremities,' he thought; 'a broken door will leave me no room to excuse myself for what I have done. I must get in by gentle means, or say I am very sorry for being so passionate, and give up the battle for the present.'

Miss Montag, who had from the window seen his action with the stone, and expected every minute to hear it crash against the door, was greatly relieved when she saw him restore it to its place on the path. Why he did so she could come to no other conclusion than that it

arose from the fact of his having seen some one coming towards the house.

Cheered by the thought that she had now nothing further to fear from his violence, her defiant spirit left her, and she was prepared to listen to anything he had to say in excuse for his late conduct. She had no wish that what had just passed between them should be talked of in the village or at the Hall. She would blush to know that her name was mentioned in connection with his. She knew that she was and had been dependent on the bounty of others, and that there might be no hope for her that she would ever rise to any position in the world higher than that held by the wife of a gamekeeper.

Still she shrank from any avowal of what she could or what she wished to do, and therefore, on her part, was prepared to come to terms with Philip, if it could be done without her yielding up her defensive position, until she was assured of her present safety.

Philip having discovered that he could not prudently attempt to gain his point by force, went serpent-like to work, to accomplish it by cunning, or to repair the damage he had done to his credit by his outburst of passion.

‘If you will not open the door,’ he said, ‘I

hope you will listen to me and believe what I say, when I tell you that I am very sorry if I have offended and frightened you. If I should say it all meant nothing, I should lie, for I cannot help loving you, however unworthy I may be of your notice. But if you will pardon me for my rashness this once, I promise you I will never repeat the offence. Can you say you will pardon me, and not expose me to Mr and Mrs Smith or my fellow under keepers? If you can, I will wait patiently for your answer to my more serious question.'

'If you will now go away and leave me to my work in quiet, as Mrs Smith will expect to find me on her return, I will do as you wish.'

She was pleased to get over her difficulty on such easy terms, while she resolved that no chance in the future should give him an opportunity of ever finding her alone again.

'Then I will go away directly,' said Philip; 'but I should be very glad if you would first shake hands with me in token of your forgiveness.'

'Can I trust you?' asked Miss Montag.

'Yes,' he replied eagerly, 'as you can trust your heart with its own secrets.'

In the course Miss Montag took, she trusted rather to herself than to him. From the window

she had just seen Mrs Smith, with her child in her arms, coming towards the house. With nervous hands she hastily replaced the furniture, and stood prepared to unlock the door, as soon as she could hear the footsteps of her deliverer.

Philip, hearing her busily employed within, finishing with the driving back of the bolt, jumped to the conclusion that his victim was fairly caught. But to make sure that there would be no one to interfere with him, he once more cast a searching glance around, when, to his dismay, he saw Mrs Smith within a few hundred yards of the house.

Without a moment's hesitation he slipped away to his own place, took out his gun and went off. Her sudden appearance had taken him so much by surprise that he could not throw off his diabolical triumphant look, and meet her with a smiling face. He did not, however, escape her notice, but as there was nothing strange in his going out with his gun, he did not excite her curiosity.

This, no doubt, was partly due to her anxiety about her darling boy. In answer to the eager inquiries of Lizzie, she said the doctor had commended her for coming to him, as the sting of the wasp had produced a very painful and

serious wound, which would require not only medical treatment, but great care on the part of the nurse. 'He is to go to bed directly, and if you will take your work and sit with him, I shall be very glad. It is very unfortunate the servant is out holiday-keeping to-day.'

'You know,' said Lizzie, 'you can safely leave him with me, while you are busy preparing the tea for the others.'

Thus the late scene passed away without leaving any mark behind, save in the minds of those who had been immediately concerned in it.

While Miss Montag sat by the sick child, musing over the late occurrence, Philip, scarcely conscious of what was passing around him, was making his way in the direction the reports of the guns were guiding his footsteps. He had neither wish nor patience to control his feelings. He knew that they were desperate, and pointed to a fearful future. When young men, cursed, it maybe, with tempers and dispositions like Philip, commit some crime or rash act which sober-minded men tremble to think of, their friends endeavour to find excuses for them, and when all fail, would fain shelter them from the consequence of their crimes on the plea of insanity, and they are comparatively happy

if they can substantiate their claim to such a plea.

But Philip cared nothing for what his friends might think of his actions, further than as he could use their thoughts to his own advantage. But he had no friends, at least so he was resolved to think. 'I am a fool,' he thought, as he pushed his feet through the dead leaves and dry twigs that lay scattered in his path. 'Yes; I am a fool to let that girl get such a mastery over me. Could I but once bring her to reason, I would soon cure her of her indifference to me, or her partiality for another. I wonder if she knows how I can hate. It will be well for her if she does not invite me to show her.'

'But how could she look with anything but contempt upon a child of a servant, which they say I am, and which I don't believe. There must have been a mistake somewhere, or I should not feel as I do. What have I of the servant in my nature? Let it be that I am from the flesh and blood of a servant. Is my spirit from the same source? If Sir Edward thought so, why did he not leave me to grovel in the dust with my fellows? Why was I sent to school, and taught to feel and act like a gentleman? Was it just to please his own fancy, or was it that he saw I was possessed of

a spirit that did not come from my so-called father? In either case, he is answerable for what he has done.

‘But what has that to do with my love for Miss Montag? If I were to settle down here with her, I should be no better off than a servant, and yet she cannot see the sacrifice I am ready to make for her. Give up all my ambitious thoughts, and proclaim myself her and my master’s slave all the days of my life. Was that a sacrifice not worth her acceptance? She says no one has put the question to her that I have, but she would not say she did not love another; but she does, and I know the man, and he shall know I do.’

While these and such like thoughts were rushing madly across his brain, he came unexpectedly upon the shooting party, who, having finished their sport, were on their way back to the keeper’s house. To his annoyance, they all appeared in excellent spirits. Everything had passed off well, and they were returning with several brace of birds. Even Oliver was pleased with his work, for he had fairly brought down a pheasant in the midst of his companions, besides a partridge he had secured, when only Jasper was with him.

The pleasure of a shot with Jasper was all

that he required. For the credit of killing the bird he did not care a pin, while Oliver was so little careful about the pleasure of firing, that he was never happier than when he could transfer it to another. He was able to join in a laugh at the expense of Dixon, who had, in his eagerness to secure a pheasant which had fallen mortally wounded into the branches of a tree that overhung a shallow pool of water, trusted to a rotten branch for support, and fallen all of a heap, as Jasper said, souse into the water.

It was a sharp struggle with him for a few seconds, as in his fall he struck his head against another branch, and knew little of what had happened until dragged to the bank by the united efforts of Smith and Jasper. Then he was quickly on his legs again, and shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog. But instead of bringing out again his dripping clothes to their full shape, as the dog would have done his hairy coat, he only displayed the more plainly the effects of his moving accident. In his fall, as he passed through the branches of the tree, grasping at each by the way to arrest his progress, the branches had in turn done something very like grasping at him in return, so that his clothes, which had seen better days,

fell with him into the water, tattered and torn, in which state they appeared fluttering around him as he stood shaking himself on the bank. Where his cap was no one could tell, but it was generally supposed to be in the mud at the bottom of the pool.

Jesse, seeing Dixon looking with a woe-begone countenance at his dilapidated condition, whispered to him that he had some old clothes at home he would give him, and a cap to replace the lost one. Dixon therefore felt he had no cause to regret his mishap, and, wet as he was, joined heartily in the laugh against himself. Jasper was particularly merry at the poor fellow's appearance, until told by him that if he thought it such fun, he would take the first opportunity that presented itself of letting him have a taste of it himself.

When Philip met the returning party, and heard of Dixon's fall into the pool, he whispered in his ear,—

‘It is a pity they took any more trouble about you than they did about your cap. You could not have found a nicer place to lie down in, or one that would suit you better.’

They had fallen behind the others, and Dixon, not seeing any particular humour in his words, said,—

‘What do you mean? Would you have left me to be smothered in the mud, rather than have dirtied your shoes to get me out?’

‘I had not the pleasure of seeing you there,’ said Philip, ‘so I can’t say. But the world is an ill-natured place.’

‘You are an ill-natured, conceited puppy,’ retorted Dixon, growing very warm, despite his wet clothes clinging to his body.

‘I would advise you,’ said Jesse, turning and speaking to Dixon, ‘to run away home as fast as you can, and change your clothes. You will not forget to come to me in the evening.’

‘No, sir; thank you,’ said Dixon, and scampered off.

‘The fool,’ thought Philip. ‘He does not yet know whom he has to deal with. He has been making himself very agreeable to his young master, I suppose, to put me in the background.’

‘There is an outlying wood,’ said Smith to Philip, ‘that has, I think, not been looked to to-day. I wish you would run round and see that all is right there.’

‘I suppose you mean Black Wood?’ said Philip, in a surly tone.

‘Yes.’

‘Very well. I will go round that way,’ and

without further ado he moved off in the direction indicated.

‘If you will go on,’ said Jesse to his brother, ‘I will overtake you before you reach the Hall. Take your game with you. Oh, you have it, I see,’ he added, looking toward Jasper, who had the pheasant and partridge in his hand.

‘Yes,’ replied Oliver, ‘you know I like to show what I have done, and I have been successful to-day.’

‘I think you are improving very much,’ said Jesse, ‘and will soon be able to challenge me.

‘Shall we show them to Sir Edward?’ asked Jasper.

‘Of course,’ said Jesse, ‘and any one else you may meet with.’

Then he slackened his pace, and added to Smith,—

‘I don’t want to appear curious about the relationship that exists between you and your helpers, but I cannot help saying that I think Philip treats you with but little respect.’

‘He is rather strange, sir,’ replied Smith.

‘And positively rude,’ added Jesse, ‘when out with you. I hope he behaves better at home?’

‘He is a little conceited,’ replied Smith, ‘but my wife says, she thinks he means well, though

he does not get on very well with his fellow under keepers.'

'I am sorry that you have been troubled with him,' said Jesse.

'I am always pleased to do anything to oblige Sir Edward,' said Smith, 'and when Philip came, you know he was in trouble about his London business.'

'Yes,' said Jesse, 'but that is all over now; and if he grows troublesome to you, you will do well to remind him of his obligation to you.'

'I do not care to have any words with him,' said Smith.

'I daresay you are right,' said Jesse, 'as you will not have him here much longer I think. I have spoken to my father about him, and he has promised to find him some other employment at a distance from Woodfield.'

'It will be better,' said Smith, 'not to talk of his going until it is quite decided that he shall go, or he will become worse than useless here. I am afraid his learning has not fitted him for the duty of an under keeper.'

'Learning can never unfit a man for anything, is one of my father's favourite propositions, and he must be right.'

'But if it makes people discontented with

their position in life,' said Smith, 'I am afraid it does not do them much good.'

'That is the abuse and not the use of it,' said Jesse. 'The first thing a man discovers from his learning is, that if he would keep his mind and body in a healthy state, he must work. Of what kind the work may be is quite a secondary consideration.'

'But some kind of work is more respectable than other work,' said Smith. 'Is it not?'

'Yes, in the estimation of silly people, my father says,' replied Jesse; 'but since a man does not order the time and place of his coming into the world, and can only at best modify his position by his own exertions, it surely must appear that, be a man's station what it may be in life, if he is doing his duty fearlessly and honestly, he is not to be looked down upon by any one, or imagine himself that, because he is poor, he is not to be held in respect. But here we are at your house, and there is your smiling wife with her children ready to greet you with a hearty welcome. Yours is an enviable lot, Smith. And how is the little sick man?' he asked of the mother.

'Thank you, sir,' said Mrs Smith, 'he has been suffering a great deal, but when he heard his brothers come home from school, he could

not be kept in bed, but would be dressed and brought downstairs again.'

'And you, like an indulgent mother, would not set your will in opposition to his.'

'I was afraid he would only fret if he was kept upstairs,' said Mrs Smith, 'and so I let him come down for a little while.'

'May I come in—just to ask him how he does?' said Jesse.

'We are now going to have tea,' said Mrs Smith, 'and I don't know if you can find room to get in.'

'I am not very fat,' said Jesse; 'so, with your permission, I will make the attempt.'

There had been a time, and not long since, when, if Jesse or Oliver had called, the children would have been sent out of doors to play, and her husband's tea would not have pressed so closely on her attention; but now everything appeared changed in her management. She told Smith that his tea was quite ready, and made a little extra fuss to get the children seated.

Surely she thought if the gentleman is possessed of any delicacy of feeling he will content himself while in the doorway with speaking to the child, and then at once going away.

But Jesse's delicacy at that moment did not

prompt him to act in such a manner ; threading his way through the opposing obstacles towards the fireplace, where Miss Montag was sitting with the child in her arms, he took the little fellow's hand in his, and said, 'Naughty wasp to sting Georgie.'

The little fellow looked up with tearful eyes, and repeated, 'Naughty wasp to sting Georgie.'

There was an empty chair near, and Jesse sat down, still keeping the child's hand in his own, and said something to Miss Montag, but in so low a tone that no one save herself could hear its import. It was but a simple remark—that the little hand felt very feverish, but it caused her to look up into his face, as she replied she hoped the worst was over, with such a sweet gentle look, that made Jesse for the moment feel very happy.

But there were other than loving eyes looking upon him, for Philip, having deputed the task set him by Smith to another, whom he chanced to meet, had followed at a little distance the shooting party on their return to the house. He had seen Oliver and Jasper continue their walk towards the Hall, while Jesse remained by the side of Smith. 'He is going home with him,' he thought, 'and I can

guess why he is welcomed where I am scorned. Of course the son of a servant must give place to the son of a baronet, though it may be otherwise. We shall see. I have suspected he is my rival, and if I can be sure of it, I will drive him out of my way, or he shall die. I fancy if Sir Edward knew me as I am, he would not have me with a loaded gun so near his darling son.'

When he saw Jesse enter the house, the last lingering doubt was removed from his mind, but his intense hatred kept his feelings in subjection to his will. He walked apparently unconcernedly on past the window, and as he did so, all that was passing within came plainly before him; but he saw only the two figures sitting near the fire, at the moment when Lizzie was replying to Jesse, and looking up so confidingly into his face.

His gun was loaded. Involuntarily he put it on full cock and raised it to his shoulder. It was but the work of an instant, and in the next, but for a doubt that crossed his mind, the room might have been filled with suffering and death, had his finger but ever so lightly touched the trigger. As it was, the instrument of death was as suddenly lowered as it had been raised. 'Curse on my arms,' he muttered, 'they twitch

about as if I was palsied, and I cannot be sure of him. The charge will scatter, and I may but wound him and kill others. I must wait for a better chance,' and with that he passed to his own room.

On reaching the Hall Jesse found his father and Mr Cresswell in earnest conversation about a communication the latter had received from his friend in Marseilles; but as they did not invite him to take part in it, he, having changed his dress, went into the drawing-room. He found Oliver and his sisters there recounting to each other the incidents that had befallen them during the day.

Charlotte's account, as usual, related to what she and Miss Gordon had been doing in the parish, and although she had nothing to say worthy of particular notice, she was, upon the whole, satisfied with the progress of their work. 'I think our schools,' she said, 'will favourably compare with any in the county, but I want to see our poor men less fond of poisoning the air with their tobacco smoke than they have been.'

'You would not surely,' said Jesse, 'deprive the poor man of his pipe?'

'Of the abuse of it, I certainly would,' replied Charlotte. 'Why, I have heard of cases when the money that should have gone to aid in the

education of their children has been spent on tobacco.'

'And beer,' added Jesse.

'Oh!' replied Charlotte, 'that is of much more consequence. Only let the husband take to beer, and the wife and children are ever on the verge of beggary.'

'I cannot understand how men can like nasty beer,' said Grace; 'I am sure I do not, by the very smell of it.'

'But you like a little wine,' said Jesse.

'Ah! but that is quite a different thing,' retorted Grace. 'It does not smell like beer, and I take but very little of that.'

'I have but your word for it,' said Jesse, with a laugh; 'but the poor man, I imagine, rarely gets even a taste of it. So I think, Miss Grace, you must not go in for keeping him from his beer, as some people appear to wish to do, who would have us think it is nothing more nor less than poison. If you go in for that, I believe you will a little overshoot the mark, and do mischief rather than good.'

'I say, with papa, let the poor man have his beer as cheaply as it can be brewed, and let him find out for himself how much he can afford to spend upon it, and how much of it

is good for him. If he will not do that, but prefers indulging in excess, let him be severely punished.'

'Yes,' said Charlotte, 'if you could only get him to understand his own interest, and make himself reliant, there would be little left for visitors like myself to do in the houses of the poor. And I sometimes think we are in a fair way of reaching such a happy ending to our work.'

'And do you not always feel so,' said Grace, 'I should think if you did not you would soon get disheartened; I should, I know.'

'We are often disheartened,' replied Charlotte, 'and sometimes almost in despair. But not for long; hope again comes to our aid, and we continue our work, determined with the help of heaven to succeed. I wish I could induce you to join in our work,' she said, addressing Oliver.

'You would find me only in your way,' replied Oliver. 'I could never talk to the people as you and Miss Gordon do, and when I have any money to spare, you can give it to them for me.'

'But, coming direct from your own hand, if with only one kind word, they would value it so much more.'

‘You know,’ said Oliver despondingly, ‘I more than once have tried it to please you, but it always ended in failure.’

‘Ah! but, Oliver,’ broke in Jesse, ‘the state of affairs is changing a little with us, and if I am not mistaken, you will soon be able to look a stranger in the face and not compare yourself as Tom Thumb with a giant.’

‘I am afraid you are saying what you wish more than what you expect,’ said Oliver.

‘Nonsense,’ said Jesse. ‘You do not think half enough of yourself, and so Grace would say if she had seen how you handled your gun to-day. Yes,’ he continued, half to himself, ‘and that reminds me of something I must not forget.’

‘Oh, tell me what it is,’ cried Grace.

‘Only a promise I made to Dixon,’ said Jesse. ‘I suppose Oliver has told you about his fall into the pool?’

‘Only a little,’ said Grace; ‘so do, pray, let us have your version of it.’

Jesse, with a little more persuasion, complied with her request, and so comical did he make his account of it appear, that the room echoed again and again to the sound of their unrestrained laughter.



## CHAPTER XIII.

**W**HILE the young people were so happily employed in the drawing-room, Sir Edward and Mr Cresswell were deeply engaged on the subject that had brought the latter so unexpectedly to the Hall. This had arisen from a communication which Mr Cresswell had received from his friend in Marseilles, respecting his son-in-law, Mr Lyson.

The letter, though brief, proved very important. It was to inform Mr Cresswell that, since his last communication, his friend had met Mr Lyson, who professed to be greatly in want of money to join a party that was about to set out on a tour through the Holy Land and Egypt. I mentioned your name to him, the letter went on to say, and asked him why he did not write to you, as he assured me you would advance the money, if you knew he must

either keep his engagement with his friends, or be looked upon as a dishonoured man, whose word was not to be taken.

‘But,’ he said, ‘much that he would have to say to you, would require a long explanation, and that if he could not raise the money in Marseilles, he thought his better plan would be to run over and see you, that you might learn from him personally by word of mouth the position in which he found himself placed. I told him that perhaps it was the best thing he could do, so I suppose you may soon expect to see him with you at Downend.’

‘It is most provoking,’ said Mr Cresswell.

‘But do you think he will venture to come?’ asked Sir Edward. ‘Did you not make him understand that his return without your permission would cancel your agreement with him respecting his quarterly stipend, which, according to his own account, would leave him penniless?’

‘As I have often said,’ replied Mr Cresswell, ‘if I alone were concerned in his movements, I should deal with him with a high hand. But it is not so, and while there is only a probability of his return, I cannot help feeling that the happiness and peace of mind of Edith are seriously threatened. I do not think if he

were here under the most favourable circumstances, he would regain his former influence over her. But she is naturally so gentle and forgiving, that I fear his plausible manners, as I am prepared to hear him say, that his past life is hateful to him, and much more of the same kind, that he would prevail on her to receive him as a penitent, and thereby subject herself and us to our old unhappy state.'

'And if you open a communication with him,' said Sir Edward, 'is there not some fear that you will be never free from his importunities?'

'It may be so,' said Mr Cresswell with a sigh; 'but of the two evils, would it not be well to choose the least, and send him the money he wants now?'

'I think,' observed Sir Edward, 'before I did so, I would telegraph to my friend to discover, if possible, the names of some of the gentlemen who are to be of the party for the proposed tour.'

'I am afraid,' said Mr Cresswell, 'that would only be the lengthening out of an unpleasant matter.'

'It will but be the work of a few hours,' said Sir Edward, 'and it may be the means of your discovering how far the statement is true.'

‘I will do as you suggest,’ said Mr Cresswell.

‘As you cannot expect your answer to-night,’ remarked Sir Edward, ‘I will come over to you early in the morning, if you will provide me with a breakfast at Elston Court.’

‘You will do me a great favour by taking the journey upon yourself, for, to speak the truth, I feel hardly equal to it.’

‘We will take it as settled then,’ said Sir Edward.

From the moment that Philip lowered his gun after looking in at the window at Smith’s house, a fearful purpose seemed to possess his soul. When he went to his room, it was not to throw himself on his bed and weep unavailing tears, but to prepare for an early departure from a place which had now become too hateful for him to live in one hour longer than he was obliged. With a frowning brow he looked round the room, then passing from point to point, he collected such little things of his belongings, as he thought he could, without inconvenience, carry away with him.

Having done that, he muttered, ‘I will go and see that stupid old man I have been taught to call my grandfather, and with or without his consent get the money I must have, before I can start. If I can get it from him at once, I

may finish here very soon, and be no one knows where by to-morrow this time. If he will have me wait, I must try what a little gentle force will do to help me to what I want.'

As he was about to leave the place, he heard a knock at his door, followed by a child's voice, saying, ' Philip, mother says will you come to tea? It has been ready ever so long.'

' I don't want any, tell your mother,' he replied, in a thick gutteral voice.

As soon as he heard the footsteps of the child pass from the door, he opened it and sallied forth in an opposite direction to that his little messenger had taken. He was not in the humour to speak to any person as he bent his steps to the private room of his grandfather at the Hall. Using the liberty that his connection with the inmates gave him, with a slight inclination of the head, he passed by the under servants he met by the way, and entered the well-known door.

His grandfather, as was his usual custom before he went to the dining-room to perform his duties there, had seated himself in his arm-chair before the fire and dropped off to sleep.

Philip having decided that he must have some money, thought he would go very gently to work, and surprise him into a compliance

with his wish by any amount of flattery he might find it necessary to use, and if that would not do, resort to force.

Closing the door softly behind him, he advanced a step or two towards the fireplace. Certain sounds coming from the chair before him proclaimed his grandfather to be soundly asleep. That room was the old steward's castle, and into which his son, who was the real head of the domestic department, did not venture to enter without a previous knock for permission. This had caused the old man to be a little less careful than he might otherwise have been in keeping his desk locked and the key in his pocket.

On the present occasion the intruder, seeing that the desk was open, his mode of proceeding underwent an immediate change. Instead of making a noise to awaken the sleeper, or sitting down until he should arouse, he passed lightly and swiftly over to the desk, and having secured a paper of sovereigns, left the room as quietly as he had entered it. As there had been no one to stop his ingress, so was there no one now in the way of his egress. His father happening to be in Sir Edward's room at the time, he passed away from the Hall without having been seen by him.

‘Fortune begins to smile upon me,’ he thought, as he hurried back to his place, which he entered noiselessly, and then, after making a sudden clatter, went out and passed round to Smith’s door. The tea things were still on the table, but the business of eating and drinking was over.

‘I thought,’ he said, ‘when you sent to me I did not want any tea, but now I feel a little thirsty, and I will thank you for a cup.’

‘What a pity you did not come when I sent to you,’ said Mrs Smith. ‘I had a nice cup ready for you then, and now it will be but little better than water.’

‘Thank you,’ was the reply; ‘that will do very well.’

As he spoke he took a more careful survey of the room than he had yet ventured to do. The occupants of the fireplace were gone; Jesse to his dinner, and Lizzie upstairs with the sick child. On the instant he became very talkative, and very curious to learn all that had taken place during the afternoon.

‘On my way to the wood you sent me to,’ he said to Smith, ‘I met Jenkins, and as he was going that way I asked him to look round the place. I thought that would do as well as going myself.’

‘Perhaps it will,’ said Smith, ‘but it is always better to do what we have to do ourselves than to hand over our work to another.’

‘Jenkins is a very careful man,’ put in Mrs Smith, on account of peace.

She disliked to hear her husband at high words with any one, but she could not bear, as she often said afterwards, that anything unpleasant should pass between him and Philip.

But Philip on the present occasion betrayed no symptoms of annoyance at the words which Smith had addressed to him; in short, he made it seem questionable if he heard them. He was very attentive to Mrs Smith, and full of inquiries about little Georgie; said the wasps were very troublesome; that he thought they were always more lively on a warm day, but that the heat had the opposite effect upon him; that it made him sleepy; that he was so sleepy when he was told the tea was ready, that he thought he answered in his sleep.

‘How funny,’ said Mrs Smith. ‘Billy said he thought he heard you go out, and you were asleep on your bed all the time.’

‘I think you are going a little too fast, wife,’ said Smith. ‘He did not say he was on his bed.’

‘I was though,’ said Philip; ‘and asleep too, I am ashamed to say.’

‘Nothing to be ashamed of,’ said Smith. ‘If keepers can’t sleep when they are tired in the day time, they would find it very hard to be obliged to be out and wide awake all night.’

‘Have you anything in hand for to-night?’ asked Philip.

‘No—but we are to go out with the young gentlemen in the morning.’

That evening passed away with its usual harmony at the Hall, but Sir Edward appeared thoughtful, and at times a shade of care and sadness would come over his features. From whatever cause this might arise, a close observer could have seen that it received no encouragement from him, but that, on the contrary, he strove to appear very cheerful.

The tongues of the young people had little rest. Their minds were full of the doings of the bright world in which they lived, and kept them actively engaged in conversation until the hour for retiring arrived.

When Sir Edward went to his room it was not to enjoy, at least for awhile, the blessing of sweet repose. Mr Cresswell’s visit caused him considerable uneasiness. Old thoughts of

his disappointment recurred to his mind with a fearful distinctness, so that he almost realised them as belonging to the present. Though nearly twenty years had been numbered with the past, the gulf that separated him from his college days seemed but a little span which he could leap over in an instant.

He felt that he was in the presence of one he had called his friend, and into whose ear he had poured secrets he had intrusted to no other. He could fain believe that his friend was not changed ; that the Lyson of his youth was now the Lyson of his middle-age. But it could not be—for, alas ! how different was the fact. Had he learnt more from Mr Cresswell's present communication than he knew before ? No ; but for some reason which he could not define, his knowledge impressed the great change that had taken place more strongly on his mind.

From the first hour of Lyson's falsehood declaring itself in the matter and manner of his gaining the hand of Edith, Sir Edward had purposely closed his eyes and ears, as far as he was able, against any and every chance of hearing or seeing anything that could remind him of one so base and faithless, and in a great measure he had succeeded.

It is true he was on the most friendly terms with Mr Cresswell, who was so nearly connected with him in the past; but, for obvious reasons, that past was never alluded to by either of them in a way that could recall its bitterness, unless when, as in the present instance, it was forced upon them.

Whenever Edith came in person visibly before Sir Edward, or mentally in his mind's eye, he strove to think of her as a child, when he could call her his dear sister, and kiss and clasp her to his arms as a saint might an angel. He would not—he dared not, think of her as in after years, when the true nature of his love was revealed to him. To think of her in such a way would be, if not maddening, destructive of all the better instincts of his nature, and therefore he made it the business of his life to keep such thoughts in abeyance.

Had his passion been declared to Edith, he felt that he could never have met her again as of old. Their mutual knowledge of the fact when it was too late to make their knowledge of it only a source of pain and bitterness of spirit, must have kept them apart for ever. But the truth being confined in his own breast, and she being absolutely ignorant of it, made that which would have been impossible, not

only possible, but very desirable for their general happiness.

Why, then, after these many long years, should he again be disturbed? Why, instead of going to bed after bidding his children good-night, did he for more than an hour pace up and down his room, while thoughts of past and present mingled themselves together in his brain without order or guidance? 'I am grieved for poor Edith,' he thought. 'Her father has been doubtless greatly disappointed and perplexed, but hers is the entire wreck of an innocent life.' At length, feeling that his thoughts did not point to any satisfactory conclusion, he retired to rest with the intention of being early in the saddle the next morning, on his way to Elston Court.

Sir Edward was not alone in his wakefulness that night. The old steward, before he left his sitting-room, as his custom was, examined the contents of his desk to see that he had placed everything in order, and especially to assure himself that his money was safe. At first he went about his task as a mere matter-of-form. He was alone, but had any one been near to observe him, he would have witnessed a gradual change creeping over his countenance. He moved his money and papers about at first,

as if in search of something that could not be far off. Then his action grew quicker and nervous ; then he suddenly stopped and looked thoughtfully round the room. After a few seconds he resumed his search by emptying his pockets one by one with a jerk out on to the table, still the something he was in search of evidently did not make its appearance. Then he went back to his desk, and passed its contents once more carefully through his hands.

‘ It is very strange,’ he muttered—‘ I had two parcels of sovereigns, and now I can find but one of them—where can the other be ? I have not left my room a moment unlocked since I saw them here, and I don’t think I have been asleep much to-day, and even if I had, who could have come in and stolen them ? No, no ; they must be here somewhere ; but I suppose I must leave them till to-morrow. Though I can’t find them now, I daresay I shall find them fast enough then.’ Coming to this, satisfactory conclusion, he huddled all his papers back into his desk, muttering, ‘ I am too tired now to put you in order, but I will see about you betimes to-morrow morning.’

And he was up early, but, to his great disgust, to little purpose. The daylight of the morning helped him no better to the sight

of the missing packet than the lamp of the previous evening. Had he not feared that there was still a chance of his having overlooked some corner or place into which the parcel had crept, he would have announced his loss to Sir Edward before he set out on his journey to Downend; but that fear kept him silent, and he saw his master off without uttering a word of the perturbation of his soul.

‘It would be bad enough to lose his money; but it would be much worse,’ he thought, ‘if he made a great noise about it and then had to confess that it had not been lost, but only mislaid. It would make him the laughing-stock of every underling in the Hall, and he could not stand that,’ so he went to work again with his search, and of course with as little success as before.

At length having assured himself beyond the possibility of doubt that the packet was not in the room, and that he had not carried it out, he summoned his son to his aid, and explained the matter as far as he could to him. Having done that, he added,—

‘Now, you think you are very clever, just tell me if you can where the money is.’

‘Are you quite sure you have searched every place?’ inquired his son.

‘Yes; every place where it is possible I could have put it, or I should not have been fool enough to send for you.’

‘Will you allow me to examine your desk?’

‘No, I will not; the money is neither in the desk nor in the room, that I am sure of; and nearly as sure that there is some rascal about the Hall who has a false key to my door.’

‘You do not leave your desk here of a night?’

‘No, I have it carried upstairs before me to my bedroom.’

‘I can scarcely think,’ observed his son, ‘that any one would attempt to get in with a false key during the day. And you say you had two lots, and you only miss one. Do you think a thief would leave the one and take the other?’

‘I don’t think anything about it. I know he did.’

‘But you were here all the time the door was open. Did you drop off to sleep, do you think?’

‘If there is no other way to account for the disappearance of the money, perhaps I did.’

‘Then we will question the men who were about at the time, and see what we can learn from them.’

A very little inquiry sufficed to show that Philip was seen by more than one going towards the steward's room.

'Send for him to come to me,' said the grandfather. 'I can manage him alone, I think. The rascal, if he took it.'

It was not long before Philip was ushered into the old man's presence.

'You needn't stop,' he said to his son, who had returned with him.

'Now, Philip,' he said when they were alone, 'you came in here yesterday when I was asleep.'

'That's news to me,' said Philip. 'Who saw me come in?'

'More than one man saw you near the door.'

'Outside or inside?' asked Philip.

'Now, Philip,' said the grandfather, 'when you were a child I let you do almost as you liked with me; but you are no longer a child now, and I will not put up with your impudence.'

'Nor will I with any one's ill-temper,' retorted Philip. 'Tell me when you were asleep, and then I will try and remember where I was at the time.'

'It must have been,' replied the old man, 'just before Sir Edward's dinner hour.'

'Then that's lucky for me,' replied Philip,

‘as I can bring two or three people to swear that I was asleep in my own place at that time. Now, say I had your money, and take me before Sir Edward, and see what he will say to you. But even if I was here, and took your ten sovereigns—I told you before I wanted them—suppose, when I took them, I took also some of your old papers you used to be so choice about?’

‘What old papers?’ angrily inquired the old man.

Philip saw his advantage, and did not let it pass without notice.

‘You reminded me just now,’ he said, ‘that I was once a child. Did you forget that a child has eyes and ears with which he may see and hear what he does not then understand, but what have their meaning in after years? Did I ever tell you that you used to say funny things when you were asleep and dreaming in your chair by the fire?’

‘Did you take the money?’ cried the old man.

‘Yes, I did,’ said Philip, ‘but I have not yet been to your papers.’

‘Keep the money,’ said the old man, trembling with excitement, ‘and say no more about my papers, they are not worth much. Are you going away directly?’

‘Perhaps yes, and perhaps no,’ returned Philip. ‘You will hear of me if I go, and see me again if I do not. Do you wish me to stop any longer now?’

‘Not a minute; if you are ready to go?’ was the reply.

‘If I should ever want a little more assistance,’ said Philip, ‘I may expect it from you.’

‘Do you wish to send me to the work-house?’

‘No,’ said Philip, ‘and I am not likely to get you there if I do,’ saying which he made a sarcastic bow and left the room. His father met him on his way out, but he received no further notice from his ungracious son than some muttered words about the weather, as he hurried past him.

‘Philip, Philip!’ cried his father, ‘will you not stop and speak to me? I wish very much to have a little conversation with you.’

‘Can’t stop now. Speak to you another time.’

‘You are very heartless!’ said his father.

‘Not half so heartless as I mean to be, and you may go and tell Sir Edward what I say, if you like, and get me hanged?’ and with that he disappeared.

Returning to the keeper’s house he found



## *Entomized with a Tissue*

'Well, it is your business and ~~not mine~~ the reply;—'nor yours either' it said as I saw his wife about to whisper ~~something~~ in Philip's ear. 'Let him do ~~as he~~ the same.

'I suppose he will,' said Mrs. Smith. 'I think it is a pity. Does your son now know where he is going?'

Smith, seeing the frown ~~on~~ on his brow, said angrily,—

'Well, I can't help saying it is a ~~big~~ true, he Mrs Smith. he station,

movements, approach the his gun to his

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the family at breakfast. He sat moodily down in his usual place, but he ate little. When the meal was over, he managed to get up to the side of Miss Montag. Mrs Smith saw his object was to speak to her, and acting on her well-formed plan, sent the children out of doors, and went herself over to the other side of the room to speak to her husband.

Philip seized the opportunity presented to him, and in a whisper said,—

‘Have you my answer yet?’

‘I cannot say yes,’ replied Lizzie.

‘Then I settle with you to-day,’ he hissed in her ear, ‘and if you will not be the keeper’s wife, I will save you from becoming the mistress of the keeper’s master.’

Then he turned and spoke to Smith.

Poor Lizzie was so much surprised and confounded that she could not utter a word in reply, but trembling as with an ague, she left the room.

‘I do not understand you,’ said Smith, in answer to something he had heard. ‘You do not mean to say that you are going to leave us at a minute’s notice?’

‘Yes, I’m off for the train directly. I am of no use here, and if I am, I can do better somewhere else.’

‘Well, it is your business and not mine,’ was the reply ;—‘nor yours either,’ he said, as he saw his wife about to whisper something into Philip’s ear. ‘Let him do as he pleases.’

‘I suppose he will,’ said Mrs Smith, ‘but I think it is a pity. Does your father know you are going?’

Smith, seeing the frown gathering on Philip’s brow, said angrily,—

‘Do, wife, trouble yourself with your own business, and leave Philip to his?’

‘Well, I can’t help saying it’s a pity,’ retorted Mrs Smith.

‘Don’t quarrel about me,’ said Philip. ‘I am off at once. I have got my few traps together, and if I leave anything behind, you are welcome to it. I suppose you and the gentlemen will be in the woods this morning?’

‘Yes,’ said Smith; ‘and what shall I tell them about you?’

‘Gone off to London; good-bye.’

About ten o’clock Oliver and Jesse, accompanied by Jasper, met Smith and Dixon near the house. The news of Philip’s departure had reached them at the Hall, but though it occasioned them no sorrow, it was far different with poor Lea, the father of the self-willed youth. In proportion to the ingratitude of the son, the

affection of the father appeared to increase. From a few angry words from the old steward, a horrible fear took possession of his soul, that he was entering on a course that would lead him on to destruction.

He would make one more attempt to save him. He would go down to the keeper's house before he could leave, and entreat him to stop, at least until Sir Edward's return. On reaching the place, and learning from Mrs Smith that his son had left, his spirit sank within him. She knew he was gone, but she could not say in what direction, though she thought he had taken a short cut over the hill, as she had heard him say he was going by an early train to London.

The father stopped for no more. He knew the intricate private path that led to and over the hill, and instantly set out for it in the vain hope, if not of overtaking his son, at least seeing him in the distance. Without meeting any one by the way, he arrived breathless at the summit; but his wistful eyes met with nothing but blank disappointment as he gazed around. What more could he do? Was he not helpless to control in the slightest degree the movements of his son. Convinced that such was the case, he sat hopelessly down, and

covering his face with his hands, gave unrestrained vent to his tears.

After sitting there for some minutes, he rose and was about to descend into a valley by which he could reach the Hall without again passing by the keeper's house, when he saw the sportsmen scattered abroad, beating across the valley as if in search of game. Then, coming along to an open space in the wood, he saw another man. He could not distinguish who it was, but hope whispered that it might be his son, though if what he had been told was true, he by that time would have been near the station, as he stood intently watching his movements, he saw one of the shooting party approach the spot, and the other man raise his gun to his shoulder, and cover him.

Then he saw the gun lowered and the threatened man pass out of range. It was but the work of a second or two, and the father stood as if transfixed to the earth. Could he have heard the muttered curse that broke from the man's lips as he lowered his gun, he would have understood only too well the scene that was passing before him. 'Curse you, I thought you were your master. How came you dressed up in his clothes to save him from my revenge? But he shall not escape.'

'I am sure it is Philip,' thought the father, 'and I may yet save him from a dreadful crime.' Then he hastened down to the opening of the wood; but he found no Philip there, and, to add to his perplexity, he saw the opening extended to but a very little distance, and there was met by a thick entanglement of underwood, bushes and brambles. He came to a standstill, and knew not what to do. He could see no trace of any one having lately passed through the bushes, and for him to attempt to leave the open, would only add to his perplexity.

While he stood undecided how to proceed, he saw Mr Jesse and Dixon in the valley on his side of it, and a third man not far from them, moving stealthily from bush to bush, getting nearer to them at every step. He pressed the bushes and brambles back with his left hand, while he carried the gun by the barrel in his right hand, as much out of sight as he could get it behind him. At the moment a hare startled from its form, ran into the valley, at which Jesse fired, but missed. Then a louder report rang through the woods, Dixon had fired, and having secured the hare, disappeared with it from the open.

Lea stood rooted to the spot, with his eyes almost starting from his head. He had seen

what Jesse and Dixon had not dreamed of. He had seen the third man, when apparently bringing his gun forward to the shoulder, become entangled in some brambles, and struggling forward to save himself from falling, disappear from view, when the sound of a shot from his gun mingled with that of Dixon's, left only a curl of white smoke to mark the place where the man had fallen.

As soon as he had recovered the power of motion, he hastened in the direction of the smoke, and then found a man apparently in the agony of death, and that man was, as he had feared, his own son.

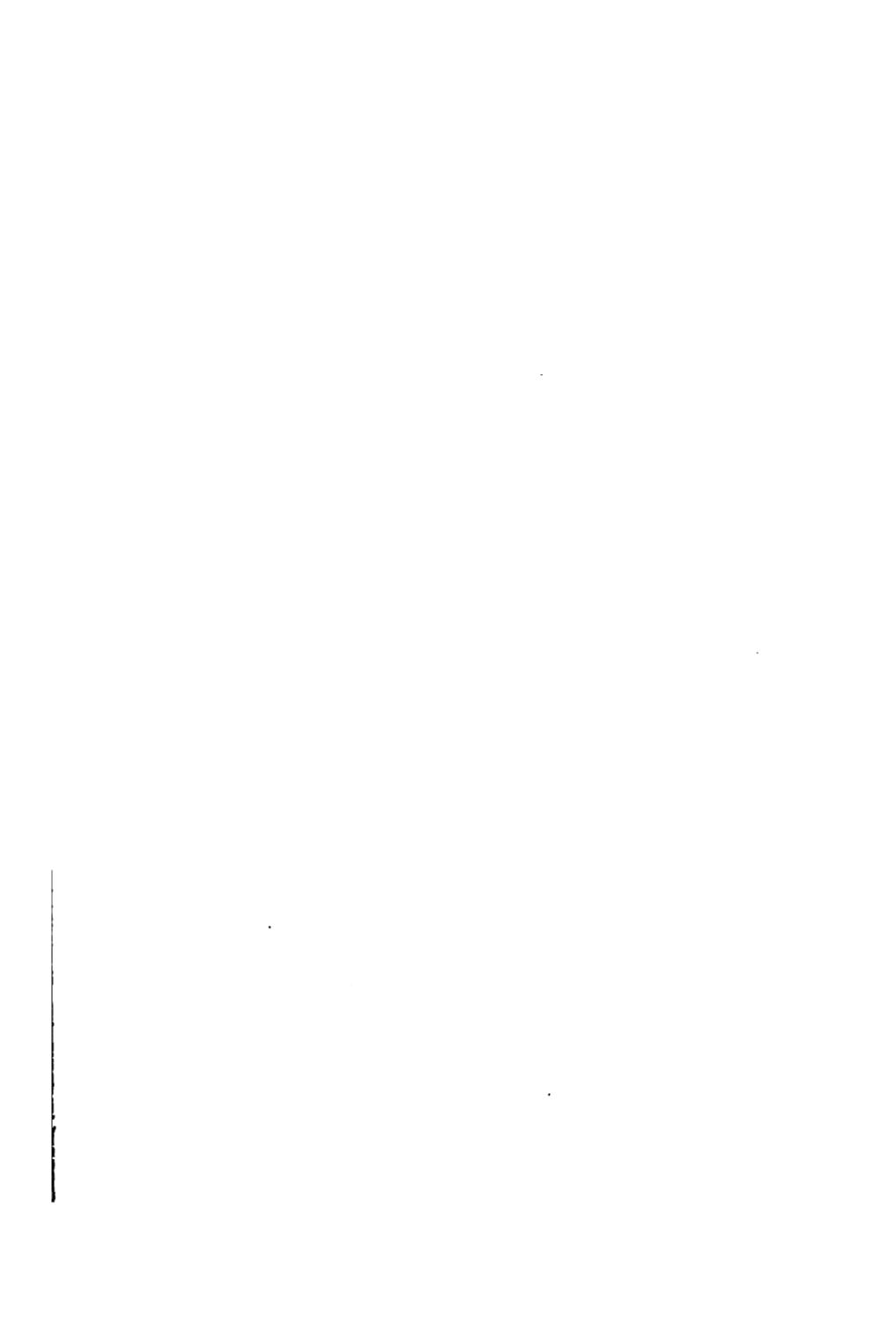
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